POPE FRANCIS' REPARATIVE VISION: A POSTMODERN HERMENEUTIC OF CATHOLIC UNCERTAINTY

BURBACH, NICOLETE,MARGARET,NATALYA

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Nicolete Burbach

ABSTRACT

Various readers of Pope Francis identify in his papal texts a striking openness to uncertainty, embodied in a rejection of fear and an embracing of alterity. These themes are united to a program of reform touching on doctrinal, ecclesiological, and pastoral matters; as well as attendant wider theological, philosophical, and affective issues. However, the general unsystematicity of both these readings and Francis' texts themselves makes it difficult to receive those texts in a way that integrates these various themes.

The critical theorist, Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick distinguishes between paranoid and reparative hermeneutics. At the heart of this distinction are their respective attitudes towards uncertainty. Paranoid hermeneutics see uncertainty primarily as a source of danger. Consequently, they attempt to foreclose uncertainty by deploying totalised, self-confirming theories which anticipate and determine their objects so as to construct them as manageable threats. In contrast, reparative hermeneutics view uncertainty with hope, looking to it as the source of unforeseen joy. Correspondingly, they are less totalising and determining, instead allowing the unknown to reveal itself.

In drawing this typology, Sedgwick integrates affective and epistemological themes in such a way as to provide a powerful tool for understanding the cluster of themes identified in Francis' writings. This thesis deploys Sedgwick's typology in order to produce a correspondingly integrated reading of Francis. It constructs a systematic reading of Pope Francis' key papal documents in order to show how he provides theological resources for a reparative hermeneutics in Catholic theology, contrasting this with more paranoid impulses within the Magisterial tradition as exemplified in John Paul II's Veritatis Splendor. In doing so, it seeks to show how Francis provides the materials for an alternative Catholic imagination, founded on a systematic theology that enables us to embrace uncertainty with hope.

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Nicolete Margaret Natalya Burbach

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I. INTRODUCTION: FIVE SYMPTOMATIC QUESTIONS

1. THE NEED FOR REPAIR

1.1. A PROBLEM OF RECEPTION

Many controversial epithets have been attached to the papacy of Pope Francis, such as "revolution", "change", "transformation", "new values" (Panotto, 2018a: xxi). Indeed, perhaps the one ubiquitous opinion is that his papacy has been a divisive one. Some of the sharpest divisions are around his perceived theological project.

There are many different analyses of this theological division. One major strand, found in commentators such as Hinze, centres the controversy around Francis' papacy on a conflict over the meaning of the Second Vatican Council. For Hinze, Francis is trying to realise the "people of God" ecclesiology articulated by the Council, with its decentralising and pastoral impulses. Hinze argues that these features of this ecclesiology came under attack during the previous two papacies, and that Francis' papacy represents a somewhat painful turning of this tide back to the original vision (2017: Online).

Kasper warns against reducing Francis to a 'progressive' reader of the Council, conceived in opposition to 'conservative' theologians, on this front (2015: 9). Indeed, Francis has his avowedly 'progressive' critics such as Cooper (2018) and Carvalhaes (2018), according to whom Francis fails to adequately challenge what they see as the Church's complicity in kyriarchy; and Hunt is careful to note that whatever changes Francis seems to be inaugurating, they do not amount to a decolonisation of the Church (2018: 98). A more nuanced version of this hermeneutic identifies Francis as championing a distinctively Argentinian reading of the Council on this front, inspired by the *Aparecida* document (which he helped to write). This includes healing "the wounds of clericalism" (Ivereigh, 2014: 372); championing a spirit of "missionary 'openness'" (Fernández and Rodari, 2016: 22); embracing *aggiornamento* as a given (Faggioli, 2015: 34); a return to a kerygmatic approach to faith (Deck, 2016: 3); and a renewed emphasis on inculturation, or the expression of faith in diverse cultural forms (Deck, 2016: 72), conceived in Christocentric terms (Luciani, 2017: xvii).[1] Also along these lines, Tran compares Francis to John XXIII and Paul VI, whom he describes as "doctrinally conservative but pastorally sensitive" (2018: 15). Echoing this,

[1] Rourke (2016b) and Luciani (2017) give the most complete analysis of Francis along these lines.

Carvalhaes contrasts him with Benedict XVI, describing Francis as more closely attuned to and concerned with the needs and life of the poor, as opposed to his predecessor's relatively more abstract and Eurocentric focus on doctrine, tradition, and liturgy (2018: 20).

Not unrelated to Hinze's analysis is the claim that Francis champions a "change in mentality" (Faggioli, 2018: Online). These kinds of narratives tend to focus on an impression that Francis seeks a flexible, compassionate 'pastoral' orientation in a Church previously dominated by an impersonal rigorism. On this point, less favourable commentators identify Francis as promulgating laxity, or "uncertainty" around key points of doctrine (Echeverria, 2017: xiv).

Together, these three narratives show something important about our understanding of Francis' papacy. The first and second indicate that Francis appears to be presenting something of a multifaceted theological programme, not in the least because both ecclesiology and pastoral theology both impinge on a wide range of theological and practical issues. From the third narrative, we should realise that this overall project lacks a clear structure. It is difficult to reconcile the individual parts that we encounter with the whole in which it 'makes sense'. This presents a challenge for our reception of those parts, which in turn leads to the fragmentation of the Church along these lines of reception – or at least enables these lines of reception to reproduce the fragmentations within the Church around which these interpretive debates often turn.

One solution may lie in a systematic account of Francis' teachings, which indicates their mutual relation and thus overall sense and/or force as a unity. Producing this is the task of this thesis.[2]

A fourth narrative, which is illuminating in this context, is presented by Dionne (2017). According to this narrative, Francis champions a rejection of the fear of alterity and difference which first arose out of Catholic reactions against modernity, and came to express itself in inward-looking and reactionary theology. We can see this narrative at work in readings of Francis which highlight a distinctive attitude in his teaching: Francis presents a new, "receptive" vision of evangelization, championing an attitude that is "outward looking", with "openness" to the unpredictability that arises from the "uncontainable freedom" of the Word (Fernández and Rodari, 2016: 46).

[2] In the next chapter, we will address issues associated with reading the texts in this way.

This narrative illuminatingly integrates affective and epistemological themes. The epistemological theme relates to questions of how the Catholic imagination figures difference, alterity, and indeterminacy – things that might appear to Catholicism as *uncertainty,* upsetting its claims to a self-contained, total knowledge. The affective theme looks at how our attitudes towards the first theme condition and are conditioned by our epistemology.

This integration serves as the basis for a powerful hermeneutical approach, for two primary reasons. Firstly, epistemology has relevance to practically all areas of theology, attending as it does to the questions of truth and knowledge which underlie the claims to truth and knowledge that constitute our theological positions. Getting a handle on these second-order issues is a necessary first step to addressing first-order issues, as answers to these questions provide the conditions for assessing how first-order disagreements must be resolved. As such, taking epistemology as our hermeneutical locus enables the reader to engage with Francis on a higher-order level from which a unified reading of various first-order themes and positions can be formed. This in turn facilitates a unified, systematic account of his corpus of writings, which is more immediately plural or multivalent.

Secondly, Francis' teachings are received in the context of the life of the Church. This includes not only our theological thoughts, but also our hopes, fears, loves and desires. Moreover, the cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions of our lives are mutually implicating, and cannot be separated out from one another (Beck, 1976). A full reception of his theology will therefore engage with all of these dimensions. That is, our systematic reading of Francis needs to be holistic, in the sense of engaging with the affective and pastoral dimensions of his project and its reception.

1.2. TWO HERMENEUTICS

In this vein, the reading of Francis constructed in this thesis circulates around these integrated concerns. The basic contention of this thesis is that readings such as Dionne's are good. In order to frame this argument, we will employ Sedgwick's typology of *paranoid* and *reparative* hermeneutics.

Sedgwick's typology articulates a distinction between two broad responses to uncertainty which involve both theoretical and affective dimensions. In combining these two dimensions, Sedgwick provides a vocabulary to systematically describe in holistic terms the way we as

thinking, feeling beings confront the world – that is, a vocabulary which integrates affective and epistemological concerns.

Sedgwick develops her typology in response to the universality of what might broadly be described in terms of Ricouer's "hermeneutics of suspicion" in critical theory (2003: 124). Sedgwick associates this ubiquitous hermeneutic with Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, in which the subject takes a stance towards the world characterised by a "terrible alertness" to dangers found in threatening objects "that one defensively projects into, carves out of, and ingests from the world" (2003: 128). Put broadly, the paranoid position is constantly alert to an anticipated threat, which it subsequently reads into, and therefore finds confirmed in, the world. Sedgwick identifies five main themes or characteristics of a hermeneutic which arises from this process of threat-projection: it is "*anticipatory*", "*reflexive* and *mimetic*", "*a strong theory*", "a theory of *negative affects*", and it "places its faith in *exposure*" (2003: 128).

Firstly, paranoia is anticipatory insofar as its fundamental imperative is: "*There must be no bad surprises*". In order to secure this, paranoia seeks to foreclose the possibility of novelty as such: the discovery of a 'bad surprise' is a 'bad surprise' in itself. As such, paranoia posits bad news as a given, and as always-already known (Sedgwick, 2003: 130). In other words, we might say that a paranoid hermeneutic attempts to *determine* the scope of possibility, foreclosing indeterminacy and uncertainty therein. Moreover, this scope is pessimistic in terms of what can arise within it.

Secondly, paranoia is *reflexive* and *mimetic.* Sedgwick writes that it "seems to require being imitated to be understood, and it, in turn, seems to understand only by imitation" (2003: 131). Paranoia only admits accounts of itself within its own terms such that to 'understand' paranoia is to subscribe to it. It also knows through a process of "knowing and embodying" its object (2003: 131), anticipating and reflecting their objects back to themselves in a process that continually reproduces and confirms that anticipation ("A paranoid friend, who believes I am reading her mind, knows this from reading mine" (2003: 123).

Sedgwick notes that these mimetic aspects give paranoia an incredible capacity to entrench and reproduce itself, foreclosing the possibility of alternative understandings of the world through endless self-confirmation as the condition of any inquiry (2003: 132). Consequently, a paranoid hermeneutic is a *strong theory*, with an exhaustive scope to its threat-anticipations. However, this strength is based upon the constant confirmation of anticipations by a *totalised* method of inquiry that is also founded upon them. Thus paranoia

has a “tautological” dynamic: it “can’t help or can’t stop or can’t do anything other than prove the very same assumptions with which it began” (2003: 135). In short, paranoid hermeneutics are *totalising,* and therein *absolutizing,* positing a knowledge that obtains exhaustively, and inevitably in all situations, and confirms itself in doing so.

Through all of this, paranoia is a *theory of negative affects.* It does not seek pleasure, but rather endlessly anticipates and confirms threats in order to forestall pain. Moreover, in doing so, it also closes off the possibility of *good* surprises, in turn reconfirming its affective stance (Sedgwick, 2003: 136-8). That is, its *absolutizing, determining,* and *totalising* features ultimately work in reaction against a world which is anticipated as being hostile, and this hostility then serves to justify those features as protective measures.

Finally, paranoid hermeneutics of suspicion have *faith in exposure*: it “acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known”, seeking constantly to disseminate its findings (Sedgwick, 2003: 138). In this, however, it also assumes a context in which the objects of paranoid inquiry are both continuously and inevitably present in an obscured manner. On the one hand, this secures the necessity of that exposure, but on the other assumes an eternal state of affairs into which they can project their anticipated threats (2003: 138-143). Thus their readings become *absolutized,* continuously repeated and projected into eternity.

Klein’s *paranoid-schizoid* position is complemented by the *depressive* position, which mitigates anxiety by actively seeking joy. The depressive subject seeks to “repair” the world by integrating its threatening parts into a more satisfying whole, which can both “be identified with and… offer one nourishment and comfort in return” (Sedgwick, 2003: 128). The depressive position is, in a therapeutic context, an “achievement” which involves moving away from the hermetic circle of paranoid practices. This new stance allows the other to be viewed as something positive, and, where potentially harmful, not *merely* harmful but as “damaged”, eliciting “love and care” rather than rejection (2003: 137). This achievement brings with it the possibility for an accompanying *reparative* hermeneutics (2003: 128).

Reparative hermeneutics approach *indeterminacy* hopefully, as a potential source of positive affect. Whereas paranoid hermeneutics expect ‘bad surprises’, and seek to avoid them, reparative hermeneutics thus allow surprises with a view to the possibility of unforeseen pleasure. This gives rise to a hermeneutical distinction: reparative hermeneutics are less inclined to posit *absolute determinations* of the world according to *totalised* sets of

categories or schemas. They do not seek to anticipate their objects, nor foreclose the possibility of novelty, instead allowing the objects to challenge the subject and 'speak for themselves'.

This thesis argues that Francis presents the basis for a reparative stance in Catholic theology, specifically towards the unknown and alterity.[3] He does this in contrast to a more paranoid approach extant in the prior Magisterial tradition (as represented particularly in *Veritatis splendor*), and we will see how this contrast lies at the heart of some of the controversy around his papacy. This contrast revolves around a difference in response to the possibility of a 'bad surprise', particularly in the form of an encounter with something that unsettles our certainties, or shows us to be wrong particularly in ways that we cannot anticipate prior to the encounter itself.

Viewed in this context, we can see how Sedgwick's typology has purchase on our theological lives. In particular, she describes the two hermeneutics as interacting in ways that ought to be immediately familiar. Firstly, each offers a different kind of assessment of the other. Reparative readers view paranoid hermeneutics as a matter of overdetermination and the circular restatement of premises. Compare this to the 'progressive' Catholic who (perhaps crudely) accuses her conservative interlocutor of 'closed-mindedness'. Against this, the paranoid reader may see the application of their strong theory as part of a journey towards truth and explanation (Sedgwick, 2003: 135). In this context, reparative hermeneutics, with their pursuit of positive affect, are dismissed as 'mere' aesthetic pleasure seeking or ameliorative reformism that dispenses with truth (2003: 144). Compare this to the 'conservative' interlocutor themselves, who may (perhaps equally crudely) dismiss their 'progressive' counterpart as lacking in 'rigour', defecting from the protective, facilitative submission to (what they understand to be) the Tradition in their rejection of its condemnations. And this is not always entirely unfair: reparative approaches can in practice amount to a kind of epistemic mastery, *determining* their objects to preserve what the reader loves and erase what they do not. In contrast, paranoid reading practices can capture both the reader's vulnerability, and the threatening aspects of the text (Tonstad, 2017: 11-12).

[3] Sedgwick herself notes that her typology is not sufficient for diagnosis, but is merely descriptive of certain features associated with these approaches. In this vein, when this thesis talks about Francis offering a 'reparative hermeneutic' (or a text offering a 'paranoid hermeneutic'), the reader should parse this as 'a hermeneutic with reparative/paranoid features', rather than a 'Reparative Hermeneutic' as such.

Secondly, N'yong-O notes that while paranoid reading practices are negative-affective, they can reflexively serve as sources of positive affect themselves. For example, the paranoid critic may employ "*recursion*", repeatedly performing paranoid critical readings in the continual hope of the possibility of a reparative approach arising (2010: 249). N'yong-O argues that societies can form around this practice, finding fulfilment in the activity itself. Likewise, we ought to recognise the communities that form around the activity of pre-emptively reading familiar theological threats into the world, condemning the latest thing as yet another form of 'Kantianism', 'Liberalism', 'individualism', 'relativism' and the like, the broad brush of their characterisations serving more to facilitate the collective activity of painting in general rather than reproducing the fine details – which may otherwise trouble their easy antagonism.

Likewise, we frequently negotiate these two features in the course of our own reflective practice as theologians. With regards to the question of mastery, when we encounter something that potentially troubles our certainties, we often find ourselves asking, "*am I being faithful to the truth, or am I actually trying to master my object – and why?"* With regards to hermeneutics as practice, we ask, "*what role is my theologising playing for me? What am I getting out of the activity, and is this appropriate?"* Moreover, we often find ourselves criticised over our answers.

One point of contrast between our use of this typology and Sedgwick's is that Sedgwick seeks to reveal the way affect is performed in different reading practices so as to draw our attention to it, and thereby enable us to evaluate them on this basis. She is first oriented to the problematic by the realisation that having a certain view of the world does not commit us to any given response to it. For example, the knowledge that the US government may well have engineered the AIDS crisis (even if it in actuality did not) is "separable from the question of whether the energies of a given AIDS activist or intellectual group might best be used in the tracing and exposure of such a plot" (2003: 124). That is, knowledge has a descriptive aspect, but it also has a distinct performative dimension, to which the latter consideration belongs. To this end, she actively seeks to disentangle the question of which kind of hermeneutic we should employ from the question of the truth of their interpretations (2003: 130).

In contrast, the central claim of this thesis is that Francis outlines a theological *rationale* for a Catholic imagination characterised by a reparative stance towards uncertainty. That is, we seek to link the content of knowledge *as* rationale to the performative dimension.

However, our approach is not entirely different from Sedgwick here: Sedgwick's project is to enable us to evaluate the affective component of our interpretive practices, and these practices by this component. However, in order to make these assessments we must be committed to some account of the world in light of which we can make our decisions about our affective responses. For example, her AIDS activist may be able to choose how they react to their knowledge of the government's disregard for queer communities, but they do so on the basis of their other cognitively held values, knowledge of strategy, etc. Consequently, even for Sedgwick, the performative follows from the descriptive component of their knowledge – just not the knowledge for which the performance is being decided.

The key difference between Francis and Sedgwick lies in the kinds of knowledge from which this performance flows. For Francis, these truths are fundamentally theological ones – truths which are given over to us by the very hermeneutics about which Sedgwick seeks to enable us to decide. This results in a certain circularity: we can only make these decisions 'from within' a given hermeneutic. Consequently, we cannot so easily disentangle the content of knowledge from the question of its performance in this context.

This also exerts a particular pressure on Francis. It is not merely sufficient for him to show the possibility of a reparative alternative to entrenched paranoid tendencies in Catholic theology. Rather, he has to 'show the way out' of paranoia, accompanying us in a shift from paranoia towards a more reparative stance. That is, his theoretical project needs to be underpinned by a pastoral one. A common, often dismissive trope is that, whereas Benedict XVI was 'a theologian', Francis is 'a pastor'. In drawing this opposition, the trope obscures a more subtle interplay between the two roles that we will attempt to bring out in Francis, most explicitly in our final chapter.

2. The paranoid paradigm

2.1. Some preliminary qualifications

Because outlining Francis' reparative vision is itself a thesis-length task, and must be done prior to any in-depth discussion of the contentions around it, this thesis does not attempt to identify all the controversial aspects of Francis teaching, or to outline these controversies themselves. However, it would nevertheless help to have a 'horizon' against which we can understand the reparative dimensions of Francis' teachings.

Moreover, a discussion of theological hermeneutics in themselves is unavoidably both abstract and general. This risks obscuring the pressing, concrete issues which arise from

debates in this sphere – which is both unhelpful in the context of our project, and morally dubious in the sense of reducing away the concerns that dominate peoples' lives through abstraction. A finer-grained analysis of the controversy around Francis' teachings in light of these issues will provide a more substantive picture of its implications for theology, and thereby start to bring this thesis into contact with the day-to-day life of the Church. It will also, hopefully, do justice to the concerns in this sphere by engaging positively with the issues as they appear within those concerns, as expressed by those who hold them.

As such, the remainder of this chapter will therefore look to one of the most notorious theological controversies of his papacy: that around his pastoral vision, as outlined in his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia.* It will show how the reaction against certain features of the document can be understood as the operation of a paranoid hermeneutical stance within Catholic theology. In doing so, it will equip us to recognise the contrastingly reparative orientation of Francis' own theology.

Before we begin however, it is worth stating that "paranoid" and "reparative" as Sedgwick employs them are not intended to be loaded terms, and each can be more or less appropriate in a given context (as mentioned above). [4] Nevertheless, "paranoia" does have a pathologizing ring to it. Similar points can be said for my descriptors of *determination, totalisation, absolutisation.* The aim of this thesis is not, however, to assassinate positions by portraying them as pathological. Indeed, this is not ultimately possible: as mentioned previously, we cannot detach our choice between hermeneutics from the knowledge given by those hermeneutics themselves. Consequently,if this thesis has a critical dialectical edge, it rather lies in presenting an alternative in the first place,[5] and in indicating a way out of paranoia and into a reparative approach – something we shall return to in our discussion of the pastoral dimension of Francis' theology in our conclusion.

In this vein, over the course of writing this thesis, I have become aware that I am a naturally paranoid thinker. For example, the first piece of writing I produced for a supervision was a

[4] Hence her activist must decide whether their energies might "best be used" in pursuing a paranoid approach: an issue about which Sedgwick is ultimately ambivalent: "they might, but then again they might not" (2003: 124).

[5] Which would indicate the impossibility of the *totalised* approaches that these positions embody and defend, although someone truly committed to them may dismiss the viability of this alternative precisely on this basis, for example by claiming that it breaks with the vision of *VS.* In chapter seven, we will talk about second-order indeterminacy, offering an argument for why we can never be certain of possessing *totality*. Granting this would undermine appeals to paranoid *totality,* but the argument is offered as incidental support for a presupposition that resolves an apparent aporia in Francis' 'alternative', rather than being made by way of merely presenting Francis' 'alternative' itself.

methodological essay which attempted to anticipate every possible issue, spiralling wildly out of control in layers of redundant reflexivity. My supervisor, on reading it, described my writing as if I'd "seen a nugget of wisdom in a neighbouring field, and then built a tank to go and retrieve it". This feedback has stuck with me throughout the writing process, and I have great sympathy and perhaps even affinity for the paranoid impulses Francis critiques.

Moreover, with regards to my descriptors, we might question where our negative reaction comes from: is it because we instinctively reject ideas of *determination*, *totalisation*, and *absolutisation*? Why? Indeed, we are about to look at John Paul II's encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* (1983), as an example of a 'paranoid' hermeneutic in Catholic theology. We ought not to read this as undermining the document: what it rather shows is that there is a way of understanding Catholicism in light of which these descriptors can take on a positive significance – that is, as features of a properly formed approach to the faith.

As mentioned above, the purpose of this thesis is to show how Francis articulates a reparative alternative to Catholic paranoia. What this thesis does *not* attempt to do is to show that this paranoia is in any sense *wrong* – although it will show where it seems wrongheaded from the perspective of a reparative approach. And if our instinctive response to the features of paranoid theology is negative, then this may or may not have significance, pending further justification. However, it is not the fact of the paranoia *itself* that is significant.

2.2. VERITATIS SPLENDOR

A significant basis for much of this contention lies in John Paul II's encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*. This contention circulates around specific ethical concepts condemned within the encyclical, but also, as we shall see, around challenges which Francis poses to the strongly paranoid hermeneutic that it constructs. As such, in order to 'set our scene', as well as to familiarise ourselves with paranoid hermeneutics in Catholic theology, we shall begin by reading *VS* with an eye to these issues. This is not to say that *VS* is in any sense the origin point of Catholic paranoia, although the encyclical certainly constitutes a significant moment in its history. However, it is specifically referenced as a basis for paranoid hermeneutics in the context of the discussion around *AL.* As such, beginning with *VS* will equip us to understand the controversy around *AL,* and then the wider hermeneutical orientation of Francis' teachings. We will move from this to present our systematic reading of Francis.

VS responds to what it identifies as a "systematic" attack on traditional Church teachings (*VS* §4). It warns that "within the context of the theological debates which followed the Council, there have developed *certain interpretations of Christian morality which are not consistent with "sound teaching"* (2 *Tim* 4:3)" (*VS* §32). These are, as the encyclical refers to them throughout, "proportionalism" and "teleologism"[6]. However, as Lash points out, the "central and overriding aim" of the encyclical is to shore up the authority of the moral principles taught by the Magisterium (1994: 23).

In this vein, the encyclical identifies the origin of this attack as lying in certain philosophical developments which have come to influence theology. These are "currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth" (*VS* §4). More specifically, the "truth" the *absoluteness* of which is under threat here is moral law. It notes that "some present-day cultural tendencies have given rise to several currents of thought in ethics which centre upon *an alleged conflict between freedom and law*". These tendencies "grant to individuals or social groups the right *to determine what is good or evil,"* which it argues affords to human freedom "a primacy over truth" (*VS* §35).

The outworking of this, the encyclical claims, is twofold: Firstly, it results in the collapse of the ability of both "the traditional doctrine regarding the natural law", and the Magisterium who promotes it, to *determine* moral belief. Secondly, it challenges the *universalisation* and "permanent validity" of the precepts associated with that doctrine. In this context, the individual is left to "independently make his or her decisions and life choices", aided but not directed by a Magisterium that can only "exhort consciences" and "propose values" (*VS* §40).

The encyclical rejects the totalisation of any one meta-ethics as a response to this situation, stating that "the Church's Magisterium does not intend to impose upon the faithful any particular theological system, still less a philosophical one".[7] However, in line with the teaching function outlined above, it states that the Magisterium nevertheless has the "duty"

[6] For an extended discussion of "proportionalism" and the debate around it, see Hoose (1987). However, what is significant for our thesis is not how *VS* treats proportionalism specifically, but what the figure of proportionalism represents more generally. We shall discuss this below.

[7] This refers to neo-Thomism: Called for by Pope Leo XIII in his *Aeterni patris* (1879), neo-Thomism built upon a tradition of Neo-Scholasticism spearheaded in the mid 19th Century by Pius IX and the German Jesuit theologian, Joseph Kleutgen (Haldane, 1999: 163-4), and was developed and enforced over the next hundred years to the point of becoming the dominant paradigm in Catholic theology. We should not, however, read this as a total abandonment of many features of this paradigm: firstly, as we shall see later, John Paul II (following Paul VI) arguably recovered themes around authority often associated with it. Secondly, he continues the 20th Century Thomist revival in *Fides et Ratio* (1998) – although in a manner that differs from the previous tradition by endorsing a specific doctrine within 20th Century Thomism (*actus essendi*), rather than Thomism as a whole (Knasas, 2000: 407).

to declare that these developments are "incompatible with revealed truth" (*VS* §29). Against these, the encyclical seeks to articulate "*the principles necessary for discerning what is contrary to "sound doctrine",* drawing attention to those elements of the Church's moral teaching which today appear particularly exposed to error, ambiguity or neglect" (*VS* §30).

With regards to our thesis, as we shall see, this 'sound doctrine' is that which safeguards the power of the Magisterium to *determine* moral theology. It does so by treating a number of controversial topics in light of a common theme: that the good, human dignity, or human freedom (in both the sense of flourishing and autonomy) are functions of obedience to the moral law. This law is taught authoritatively by the Church, so this obedience is co-extensive with obedience to the Magisterium. As a result the magisterium is placed in an *absolute* position relative to the field of moral theology. Moreover, insofar as it establishes this position within a magisterial document, this move has a reflexive dimension which attempts to *determine* moral theology such that it can only indicate this *absoluteness* and *determining* power; and also to foreclose the moral-theological imagination beyond the magisterium, which is thus *totalised*.

2.2.1. The moral life and the moral law

This theme is first developed in relation to a particular construal of the moral life, and its relation to the possibility of moral knowledge. *VS* begins by affirming the necessity of the moral law to the moral life. It does so by linking the moral law to revelation, the response to which lies at the heart of the whole of Christian life.

VS locates the basis of moral knowledge in a response to revelation. However, this conception of revelation is characteristically post-Vatican II – it is not a set of propositions imparted from on high, but the person of God Himself. It begins with an exegesis of the story of the young man in Mt 19:16-21, who asks Christ about the nature of the good. Christ responds by telling the young man to look towards God's commandments (*VS* §6-9). What this indicates, according to *VS*, is that

> ***To ask about the good*, in fact, *ultimately means to turn towards God*, the fullness of goodness. Jesus shows that the young man's question is really a *religious question*, and that the goodness that attracts and at the same time obliges man has its source in God, and indeed is God himself.**
>
> (*VS* §9)

That is, the moral life is a matter of response to revelation. However, the personal nature of revelation and the Good does not mean that the moral life itself, which occurs in response to it, has a non-propositional form. Rather, "*[a]cknowledging the Lord as God is the very core, the heart of the Law,* from which the particular precepts flow and towards which they are ordered" (*VS* §11). That is, this revelation, and so the moral life itself, is constituted by the ten commandments. Consequently, our response to this revelation, and thus the moral life itself, lies in obedience to the commandments.

VS now develops this in order to connect freedom with obedience to this Law. The encyclical does this by invoking the idea of the natural law: God creates and orders humanity towards its final end by infusing us with "the light of understanding" with regards to morality. This infused understanding is "the natural law" (*VS* §12). *VS* argues that the precepts evident to the natural law are the precepts of the decalogue: because our fulfilment, or our good, lies in God, and because it is through obeying the ten commandments that we attain this good, the natural law also directs us towards following the commandments. Indeed, the commandments themselves are a gift, and therein a sign of the promise of this fulfilment (*VS* §12). Furthermore, *VS* notes, when the young man asks Jesus as to which commandments he ought to follow, Jesus directs him towards those "regarding one's neighbour". This indicates the ""*centrality" of the Decalogue* with regard to every other precept". Moreover, *VS* claims, Christ's focus on those specifically relating to love of neighbour demonstrates that "[t]he different commandments of the Decalogue are really only so many reflections of the one commandment about the good of the person, at the level of the many different goods which characterize his identity as a spiritual and bodily being". That is, these commandments, in their concern for the good of the person, are "*the first necessary step on the journey towards freedom, its starting-point*" – that is, they outline the basic conditions for the fulfilment of our end (*VS* §13).

These commandments are "negative precepts", which "are meant to safeguard *the good* of the person… by protecting his *goods*". These goods are "human life, the communion of persons in marriage, private property, truthfulness and people's good name" (*VS* §13). However, invoking Augustine, *VS* notes that they are merely "the beginning of freedom", in which one is "free from crimes... such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, fraud, sacrilege and so forth". In contrast, we are directed towards "perfect freedom" (Augustine, in *VS* §13). This perfect freedom is attained through the "*fulfilment*" of the commandments, which lies in "*interiorizing their demands and by bringing out their fullest meaning"*. This means

cultivating “love”, which actively “protects and promotes” the goods of the person (*VS* §15). The nature of this love is outlined in the Beatitudes. These “speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life” in which we attain our end, outlining the “horizon of the perfection” to which we are oriented by the commandments (*VS* §16). That is, when we are ‘the poor in spirit’, ‘the peacemakers’, ‘the meek’ etc., we will be properly ‘loving’, and therein have attained our Good. This love can also be thought of in terms of self-gift, as evidenced in how “*Jesus himself is the living "fulfilment" of the Law* inasmuch as he fulfils its authentic meaning by the total gift of himself” (*VS* §15).

However, to attain this, we must already have “*that maturity in self-giving to which human freedom is called”* (*VS* §17). *VS* uses ‘freedom’ in a second sense here. *VS* later quotes *Dignitatis humane* to define this freedom as being the capacity of an agent to “decide on their actions on grounds of duty and conscience, without external pressure or coercion” (*Dignitaries humane* §1; in *VS* §31). We might gloss this as *autonomy*, wherein the agent ‘gives themselves’ the law by which they act. In this context, to attain ‘freedom’ in the sense of our end requires the capacity for self-giving which is a constituent part of that end. This enables us to exercise our agency in order to perform this self-giving – that is, to love.

This places us in a paradoxical position: in order to attain our end, we must possess a condition which is constitutive of that end – thereby requiring us to have already attained our end. More specifically, this also implies that our end includes unconstrained agency.[8] *VS* moves from this to outline the relationship between the commandments and human agency: the law directs us towards our end, wherein we find the capacity for love. Moreover, it is only in love that we find freedom in both senses of the word. Thus it is only through following the law that we achieve autonomy. That is, we “find in God's Law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practise love as something freely chosen and freely lived out” (*VS* §18). Without it, we remain constrained insofar as we are unable to exercise our agency in this manner. And, conversely, people who have cultivated love no longer find that law a constraint upon them. Rather, recognising its true relation to love, they “feel an interior urge — a genuine "necessity" and no longer a form of coercion — not to stop at the minimum demands of the Law, but to live them in their "fullness"” (*VS* §18). We noted previously that this ‘fullness’ lies precisely in love. As such, to put it another way, we might say that love wills itself.

[8] At least with regards to the capacity for self-giving.

Grace resolves this paradox, granting us our end and the conditions proper to it: *VS* describes the beatitudes first and foremost as "*promises*", from which "normative indications" only "indirectly flow". As such, they are not just injunctions to (for example) 'be meek' or even to love, but are *"invitations to discipleship and to communion of life with Christ",* who exemplifies them (*VS* §16). As such, they are not something which must be worked towards across the paradox, but are rather something which is given in totality as grace (*VS* §21). In this way, we "*become capable of this love only by virtue of a gift received"* (*VS* §22). We are made righteous according to the Law by grace, and not through following the Law under our own power (which, for this reason, is impossible) (*VS* §23). In this context, the Law has a "pedagogic function", making us aware of our lack of righteousness and thus of the need to turn to Christ for the grace by which we can be righteous (*VS* §23).

VS continues to argue that the awareness of having received this gift "generates and sustains the *free response* of a full love for God and the brethren" in us (*VS* §24). That is, our obedience to the Law is an autonomous response, because it arises from the love within us. However, God grants the condition for our obedience to His demands in the form of the law – that is, it is also (indirectly) received from outside in the form of its condition of possibility (love).[9]

Moreover, the fact that love is received as a gift "*reinforces the moral demands of love*". This is because, *VS* argues, "[o]ne can "abide" in love only by keeping the commandments, as Jesus states: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (Jn 15:10)" (*VS* §24). That is, our reception of the gift of love is dependent upon our continuous obedience to the Law.

2.2.2. THE MORAL LAW AND THE MAGISTERIUM

Having established that human freedom (in both senses of the word) is contingent upon, and realised in, obedience to the Law, the encyclical now moves to associate obedience to the Law with obedience to the Magisterium.

It begins by arguing that the moral life, so construed, is inseparable from the wider faith of the Church: "The Church is in fact a communion both of faith and of life; her rule of life is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6)" (*VS* §26). This is evidenced by how the Letters of the apostles provide a "*moral catechesis*" - they "contain the interpretation… of the Lord's

[9] Whether or not this constitutes genuine freedom (in the second sense) is a long-debated issue.

precepts as they are to be lived in different cultural circumstances". *VS* is careful to note here that these interpretations are "made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (*VS* §26).

The encyclical then makes the leap to claiming that the unity of the Church is disrupted when its members neglect the Law.[10] It states that "*the unity of the Church* is damaged not only by Christians who… disregard the moral obligations to which they are called by the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-13)" (*VS* §26).

This provides the basis for the argument that the Church's teaching authority includes the power to *determine* moral issues. It claims that "[w]ithin the unity of the Church, promoting and preserving the faith and the moral life is the task entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles (cf. Mt 28:19-20), a task which continues in the ministry of their successors". Moreover, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church receives and interprets the Gospel and the Law in an "*authentic*" way (*VS* §28). It quotes *Dei verbum* to particularly identify the Magisterium as being given "the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of Tradition", and exercising its authority in doing so "in the name of Jesus Christ" (*Dei Verbum* §10; in *VS* §27). As such, *VS* quotes the *Code of Canon Law* to assert that "the Church has the right always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles, even in respect of the social order, and to make judgments about any human matter in so far as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls" (*CCL* 747; in *VS* §27).

The Church also manifests this interpretation in "practice", which serves as a "sign and fruit of a deeper insight into Revelation and of an understanding in the light of faith of new historical and cultural situations". However, *VS* asserts, this practice is *determined* by the Church's tradition of interpretation, which stands as *absolute* in relation to the process of interpretation in the present: "it can only confirm the permanent validity of Revelation and follow in the line of the interpretation given to it by the great Tradition of the Church's teaching and life, as witnessed by the teaching of the Fathers, the lives of the Saints, the Church's Liturgy and the teaching of the Magisterium" (*VS* §28).

In summary, according to *VS,* Revelation, in a post-Vatican II personal sense, underpins the moral life. However, this life necessarily includes the Law. Moreover, the Magisterium is the

[10] This is a leap in the sense that it occludes a hidden premise which claims that a necessary condition for the unity of the Church is communion in registers of both faith and moral life. We can see why this would be the case: we saw above that, for *VS*, love is only possible conditional upon our keeping the Law. Thus our faith is conditional upon our living the moral life. This also means that the unity of the Church is conditional upon our living the moral life: if the communion of faith was sufficient for unity, communion in the moral life remains a necessary condition of this communion.

prime interpreter of this Law. Thus the moral life ought to be *determined* by the teaching of the Magisterium, in which it performs this interpretative function.

This *determining* function is then initially defended against challenges to it based on the sense that it infringes the rightful freedom of individual moral agents. Firstly, through the argument about the relationship between Law and freedom: following the Law does not infringe upon freedom, but rather both grants freedom in the sense of attaining our end, and also autonomy through enabling us to freely make a self-gift. Because we follow the Law through obeying the teachings of the Magisterium, this means that obeying the teachings of the Magisterium does not mean a constraint on our freedom in either sense. Indeed, it is actually the condition of that freedom.

Secondly, through the introduction of a sin narrative, which casts doubt on any intuitions that there is nevertheless something oppressive going on here: in summary, the encyclical argues that if we have love, we will desire love, and that if we desire love, we will desire obedience to the Law. The upshot of this is that if we *don't* desire obedience to the law, we do not will love, and thus also do not have love. Because obeying the magisterium is co-extensive with obeying the law, to will obedience to the law is to will obedience to the magisterium. Thus if we do not will obedience to the magisterium, we do not have love.

This mirrors statements made in the opening of the encyclical: *VS* asserts that we are "made holy by "obedience to the truth" (1 *Pet* 1:22)" (*VS: Blessing*). However, because of original sin, we are tempted to turn away from God and the truth in which we are made holy. As a result, our "capacity to know the truth is weakened". This results in our giving ourselves over to "relativism and scepticism", which leads us to pursue "an illusory freedom apart from truth itself" (*VS* §1). That is, the cause of our seeking 'freedom' beyond the *determinations* of the Law (read: the Magisterium) is our sinful nature.

This narrative, in both its forms, serves to evacuate the force from any arguments against this schema by associating that force with the effects of sin (rather than epistemic norms). This propadeutic strategy, which seeks to bypass any such arguments themselves, works in tandem with arguments later in the encyclical to the effect that moral theologians must conform to the teachings of the Magisterium regardless of the strength of arguments against them. We will return to this presently.

2.2.3. TEACHING AND TOTALITY

We might note here that this schema is not necessarily as *determining* as it first appears. It leaves undefined both the meaning of "obedience" and "Magisterium". This leaves open the possibility for more subtle indeterminacy, based on notions of dissent which construe themselves as in some way being an expression of obedience, or of the Magisterium itself. For example, Salzman distinguishes between two approaches to obedience here, each turning on a different interpretation of the term "*religiosum obsequium*", or the "religious respect… of intellect and will" (in distinction from "the assent of faith") which Canon Law stipulates is to be afforded to "the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff or the College of bishops enunciate on faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium" such that "the Christian faithful… take care to avoid whatever is not in harmony with that teaching" (Coriden, *CCL* 752; in Salzman, 2004: 77). *Veritatis splendour* defends a reading of this term analogous to "assent and submission". In contrast, the "revisionist" theologies which the encyclical addresses would interpret it in a sense more akin to "respect" or "submission" (Salzman, 2004: 77). Salzman illustrates this distinction by way of models of responsibility: the former invokes "a largely authoritarian and hierarchical parent-child model", in which the magisterium functions like "the parent who teaches a child, and yet, when that child resists or questions that teaching, utilizes his or her authority to ensure obedience". In contrast, the latter reading invokes a "responsible-dialogical" relationship between conscience and the magisterium, in which the magisterium recognises the need for development and refinement of its insights (where not definitively promulgated), and the active role of the whole of the Church and the sciences in this process (2004: 78). In this context, while conscience must always consult the magisterium, which enjoys a presumption of truth, it also serves as a source of corrective insight in this process (2004: 79). Thus a believer who "cannot intellectually assent to a particular teaching… can faithfully dissent from this teaching, while, at the same time, respecting the authority of the magisterium" (2004: 78).

An example of this would be critiquing an encyclical by reference to an established principle of faith, thereby opposing nominally Magisterial teaching from a position of obedience to the (prior) Magisterium, or as an expression thereof. This could take a more or less controversial form. For example, we might employ the 'letter' of a prior document to critique a newer one, such as we shall see in the case of the *dubia* about *Amoris Laetitia*. Alternatively, we might make reference to a less easily defined principle, such as the 'spirit' of the Second Vatican Council; or "reflection on faith as liberation praxis", derived from a

kerygmatic option for the poor (Gutierrez, 1979: 22). However, *VS* works to preclude the possibility particularly of this kind of dissent.[11] It does so by systematically attacking principles upon which freedom in the face of the determinate teachings of the Church as actually promulgated might be founded.

2.2.3.1. CONSCIENCE

One particularly clear example of this is its teachings on the dignity of conscience, which forms the basis for a condemnation of any dissent *simpliciter* on the part of moral theologians. This means that the positive *determinations* of the Magisterium itself stake out limits of thought 'within' the Church, thereby *totalising* them. This is reflexively supported by the fact that *VS* itself is a magisterial document: we know the Magisterium is *totalised* in this way because that is what it authoritatively teaches. Thus, if we accept the Magisterium, we must accept its self-*totalization.*

VS finds this dangerous opposition of freedom and law in the development of "a *"creative" understanding of moral conscience,* which diverges from the teaching of the Church's tradition and her Magisterium" (*VS* §54). This development is premised on the idea that general moral norms "cannot be expected to foresee and to respect all the individual concrete acts of the person in all their uniqueness and particularity". As such, the moral agent must ultimately make a decision about moral situations in a way that goes beyond the descriptions provided by such norms. In this context, conscience "leads man not so much to a meticulous observance of universal norms as to a creative and responsible acceptance of the personal tasks entrusted to him by God". Conscience thus no longer merely makes "judgments" (that is, representing situations under universal, morally-weighted categories of action), but rather makes "decisions" about the application of these categories themselves (*VS* §55).

Supposing this, *VS* claims that certain thinkers then move to claim that "autonomous" decision-making is a feature of moral "maturity". Thus in order to live in a mature way, we must have the liberty to choose to discard the moral law (as promulgated by the Church) in certain situations. In this context, it notes, "[s]ome even hold that this process of maturing is inhibited by the excessively categorical position adopted by the Church's Magisterium in

[11] This is an issue with the *dubia* which its authors do not seem to recognise. Indeed, somewhat ironically, many self-identified 'neo-conservatives' or 'traditionalists' now must learn to occupy positions ruled out by the ecclesiology outlined in *VS*, which they originally championed (Faggioli, 2016b: Online).

many moral questions; for them, the Church's interventions are the cause of unnecessary *conflicts of conscience*" (*VS* §55).

VS further claims that, "[i]n order to justify these positions", particular theologians make recourse to "a certain more concrete existential consideration" that has priority over abstract and doctrinal considerations. This consideration takes into account situational elements in order to indicate "*exceptions* to the general rule". In doing so, it can "permit one to do in practice and in good conscience what is qualified as intrinsically evil by the moral law". This establishes a "separation, or even an opposition" between general precepts, and "the norm of the individual conscience" which can overrule them (*VS* §56).

Against this, *VS* promotes an understanding of conscience as a process of applying the universal precepts of the natural law to particular situations in order to formulate moral obligation, which it reads in both Romans 2:14-15 and Bonaventure (*VS* §57-9). It reiterates that natural law "discloses the objective and universal demands of the moral good". In this context, conscience "is the application of the law to a particular case", presenting the individual not with an opportunity to accept or reject certain obligations, but with the obligation itself that flows from the precepts of the law in the context of a given action. The encyclical puts it in Neo-Scholastic terms: "The judgment of conscience states "in an ultimate way" whether a certain particular kind of behaviour is in conformity with the law; it formulates the proximate norm of the morality of a voluntary act, "applying the objective law to a particular case"" (*VS* §59). That is, it represents the situation under a determinate set of terms, with associated norms, constituted by the universal maxims of the natural law.

Indeed, the encyclical notes, conscience cannot play a creative role: the divine law is the "*universal and objective norm of morality*" from which conscience acquires its dignity and force. Thus, if we are to speak in terms of 'maturity' of conscience, this can only come from attention to the divine law -that is, "an insistent search for truth and by allowing oneself to be guided by that truth in one's actions" (*VS* §61).

VS construes this in terms of a dialectic between "subjective" and "objective" principles. The conscience is a "subjective" principle, which communicates the "objective" truth of the divine law. This accounts for the possibility of error in conscience: "In the case of the correct conscience, it is a question of the *objective truth* received by man; in the case of the erroneous conscience, it is a question of what man, mistakenly, *subjectively* considers to be true" (*VS* §63).

Moreover, it stipulates, “[i]t is never acceptable to confuse a "subjective" error about moral good with the "objective" truth”, nor “to make the moral value of an act performed with a true and correct conscience equivalent to the moral value of an act performed by following the judgment of an erroneous conscience” (*VS* §63). That is, an erroneous conscience can never redeem objectively immoral behaviour, even if we may not be culpable for it. Moreover, we can be culpable for our erroneous conscience where that error arises through a failure to cultivate it on our part. Indeed, such an erroneous conscience “compromises” the dignity of that conscience (*VS* §65).

However, it notes, “Christians have a great help for the formation of conscience *in the Church and her Magisterium*”. Invoking *Dignitatis Humanae* (§14), it asserts that the role of the Church is to inform conscience of the truth. Moreover, we cannot conceive of the Church in doing so as infringing upon the freedom or dignity of conscience for two reasons: firstly, because it provides the truth from which the rightful dignity and freedom of conscience derives; and secondly, because the principles that it provides are principles internal to right conscience, thus a conscience which functions in a way *determined* by them is acting autonomously (*VS* §64).

In other words, we must obey the Church even where our conscience seems to say otherwise – to fail to do so is to indulge in an error in conscience, and culpably so; and also to surrender the dignity of that conscience. In short, conscience loses its dignity precisely when it ceases to agree with the Magisterium.[12]

Porter (1995) frames this in a different way. She notes that *VS* fails to recognise the ways in which the moral concepts that frame universal precepts (such as ‘murder’ or ‘adultery’) admit “indeterminacy”. In emphasising the universal *truth* of the precepts, it inadvertently renders them, by omission, more general in *scope* (i.e. the range of particular historical situations in which they *obtain*) than they might be (1995: 208). As a result, there is less room for interpretation with regards to how those norms obtain in our moral lives – for example, which situations of killing constitute instances of murder. This indeterminacy allows the possibility that “people can share basic moral commitments, and yet disagree deeply and in good faith on the practical implications of these commitments”. This is reinforced by the encyclical’s identification of apparent indeterminacy in (i.e. disagreement about) moral issues with the results of a sinful impulse towards abandonment of the precepts, leading to

[12] We might wonder what the implications here are for human dignity and freedom, given the earlier argument that they derive from obedience in an analogous way.

a “pessimistic view of actual moral communities”. This reduction of possible legitimate interpretations within the moral community of the Church, alongside a pessimistic approach towards the moral reasoning of its members, leads to a corresponding emphasis on “authoritative guidance”. This amounts to the totalization of the interpretations of the Magisterium, which emerges as the sole authoritative voice on Catholic moral discourse (1995: 212).

2.2.3.2. MORAL THEOLOGY

This serves as the basis for a *determining* program for Catholic moral theology. *VS* asserts that moral theologians “have the grave duty to instruct the faithful — especially future Pastors — about all those commandments and practical norms authoritatively declared by the Church”. Moreover, it stipulates that

> **While recognizing the possible limitations of the human arguments employed by the Magisterium, moral theologians are called to develop a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying its teachings and to expound the validity and obligatory nature of the precepts it proposes, demonstrating their connection with one another and their relation with man's ultimate end.**
>
> (*VS* §110)

In other words, theologians are charged with articulating and defending the teachings of the Magisterium *even where the Magisterium itself does not give fully adequate justifications for those teachings.* On this note, *VS* demands “loyal assent, both internal and external, to the Magisterium's teaching in the areas of both dogma and morality”. That is, its stipulates that there can be no dissent, nor disobedience, on the part of moral theologians (*VS* §110). Indeed, it claims,

> **Opposition to the teaching of the Church's Pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit's gifts… *the right of the faithful* to receive Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity must always be respected… "Never forgetting that he too is a member of the People of God, the theologian must be respectful of them, and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith".**
>
> (*VS* §113)

This passage brings into contact all the themes previously identified: Christian freedom cannot be conceived as in opposition to the teaching of the Church. Rather, human freedom

consists in being able to (there is a right to) receive this teaching with fidelity. Thus the theologian must be committed to teaching in a way that does not challenge it. As a result, the teachings of the Magisterium are placed in *determining* relation to moral theology.

Moreover, *VS* accounts for this relationship in such a way that theology becomes unable to challenge the Magisterium, *absolutizing* this determining relationship: even if the teachings of the Magisterium seem to fail to meet epistemic standards, its authority holds; and all opposition to the Magisterium on the part of theologians is forbidden for the sake of the faithful.

Finally, where there was previously ambiguity around what could be identified as enjoying this authority (such that a dissenter could potentially make claim to be speaking for the Tradition), this is no longer possible. In discussing "human arguments employed by the Magisterium", *VS* situates these stipulations in the context of specific, positive teachings – what is concretely written down in its documents, such that it could be defended by arguments. As such, the precluded "[o]pposition to the teaching of the Church's Pastors" must be read in terms of the specific pastors teaching today (e.g. John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Francis etc.). A theologian can no longer claim to be speaking from the position of the 'true' teaching of the Church, because this 'true' teaching is identified here with whatever is being taught in the given moment. As such, that specific body of teaching is also *totalized* – it becomes impossible to 'think outside' it.

This works in tandem with the sin narrative mentioned previously, which accounts for the failure of individuals to apprehend supposed truths which are putatively evident to natural reason as an effect of sin on the individual. By making recourse to this account, we do not have to consider that these 'truths' just may neither be true nor so evident. In this context, the narrative reinterprets any apparent failure to account for its teachings on the part of the Magisterium as a failure on the part of the theologian who detects this failure, caused by their sinfulness. As a result, it becomes *totalised:* it is impossible to 'think outside' the scope of the teachings of the Magisterium, because any uncertainty in those teachings becomes uncertainty in the individual.

This is further consolidated by the document's reading of martyrdom as "an affirmation of the inviolability of the moral order", that "bears splendid witness both to the holiness of God's law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God's image and likeness" (*VS* §92). According to *VS,* martyrdom witnesses to the inviolability of the moral

law through the willingness to die rather than transgress its precepts. Moreover, in doing so, it exalts "a person's perfect 'humanity' and of true 'life'" – which, as we have seen, consists precisely in obedience to the law (*VS* §92). In this regard, it is also an "*outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church",* which proclaims these things in the martyrdom of its members. Furthermore, while the call to full martyrdom is a rare one, *VS* claims, there is nevertheless "a consistent witness which all Christians must daily be ready to make, even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice" – that is, all Christians are called to be obedient, regardless of the cost (*VS* §93). In other words, it is only when we are obedient that we are proper Christians – and it is only when we are obedient that we properly appreciate the dignity of others!

2.2.4. PARANOIA AND VERITATIS SPLENDOR

In summary, *VS* establishes an account of freedom, both in the sense of autonomy and flourishing, as only finding its fulfilment in obedience to the moral law. Moreover, it *totalises* the interpretation of this law as found in the actual teachings of the magisterium. As a result, it establishes the Magisterium as the sole authoritative interpreter of that law.

As a result, obedience to the moral law becomes a matter of obedience to the Magisterium. This is true to the extent that even conscience loses its dignity and authority not only if, but then also because, it attempts to go beyond the *determinations* of the Magisterium. Similarly, moral theology must be entirely *determined* by the Magisterium. As a result, the teaching of the Magisterium is *absolutized* in relation to moral theology and the conscience of the individual. This is true even to the extent that, if a given *determination* seems problematic due to the failure of the Magisterium in justifying a particular teaching, moral theologians are nevertheless bound to confirm it. Finally, this means that there is no scope for 'thinking outside' the Magisterium- that is, it is *totalized.* On this point, the scope of the term "Magisterium" becomes strictly determined such that *particular* teachings become *totalized*, thus foreclosing the possibility of deconstructing this totality 'from the inside' by contesting the centre of authority designated by the term, "Magisterium". In short, its effect is to "draw a line in the sand", implicitly declaring that those who cannot adhere to the specific formulations promulgated by the Magisterium at a given point in time "ought to cease thinking of themselves as Catholics" (Cassin, 2005: 3).

This lays the ground for paranoid reading practices in Catholic moral theology. The *absoluteness* of the schema's *determinations,* combined with its *totalisation,* leaves conceptual space only for interpreting the world in terms of the objects and relationships

that it posits – that is, specific (true, good) determinations of the magisterium; and (false, sinful) truth claims that deviate from those determinations. As such, it establishes a methodological basis for a *negative-affective* reading of any challenges to the Magisterium, which can only be identified and summarily dismissed as an effect of sin. That is, they can only be threats - but not of a kind radical enough to overturn the Magisterium itself.

These features are unsurprising in context. Odozor (1995: xiii) identifies *Veritatis Splendor* as responding to what MacIntyre calls an "epistemological crisis" in Catholic moral theology. This is, to put it briefly, a state in which a tradition of inquiry ceases to make progress by its own standards (MacIntyre, 1988: 361-2). Such a state arose in the context of uncertainties generated around fundamental theological issues to do with the nature of theology and the Church by the Second Vatican Council.

Instituted by Leo XIII in his *Aeterni Patris* (1879), neo-Thomism was the dominant paradigm in Catholic moral theology up until the Second Vatican Council.[13] Arising as a response to the Church's loss of temporal power in the latter part of the nineteenth century, neo-Thomism was accompanied by the crystallisation of a particular stance towards authority within the Church, and the relationship between the Church and the world outside it: firstly, a defensive rejection of dialogue with the secular world lead to the stifling imposition of a "monolithic" set of texts, authorities, and method. Secondly, a relatively greater emphasis on the Church's "spiritual powers", including the attribution of even greater authority to the Pope to make pronouncements "in all matters", both fallible and infallible. This in turn eventually culminated in Pope Pius XII's pronouncement in *Humani generis* of the Pope's ability to rule out certain topics for theological discussion (Curran, 1992: 14-15).[14] The paradigm was thus characterised by a clearly defined, *totalised* methodology which *determined* the form and the content of the discipline.[15]

However, the institution of this paradigm did not mean that it was universally appreciated. Writing in 1899, only twenty years after the publication of *Aeterni patris,* the Belgian moral theologian, Thomas Bouquillon laments that "the present condition of Moral Theology is in

[13] This tradition is known or associated with a number of names which denote various features, such as neo-Thomism, neo-Scholasticism, teleological-deontological "classicism" (Curran, 2002: 54), "Catholic moral rationalism" (Langan, 1989), or "manualism" (Keenan, 2010: 11).

[14] "…if the Supreme Pontiffs in their official documents purposely pass judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute, it is obvious that that matter, according to the mind and will of the Pontiffs, cannot be any longer considered a question open to discussion among theologians" (*Humani generis* §20).

[15] For a good overview of this, see Langan (1989).

strange contradiction with its intrinsic character and with the spirit of the day" (1999: 91), characterising it as revolving around uncritically parroting authorities, regardless of the adequacy of the argument; ignorant of contemporary developments in thought; and failing to anticipate new problems, or convince people of the value of its insights with regards to them (1999: 92-3).

These dissatisfactions came to a head in the Second Vatican Council, particularly around the inability of Neo-Thomism to engage receptively with thought and issues from outside its narrow traditional boundaries. From this dissatisfaction came the impulse towards *aggiornamento,* which motivated the Second Vatican Council to reconfigure the philosophical-theological landscape.[16] Furthermore, concerns rose within the Council itself around the appropriateness of Neo-Thomism as the language for an ecumenical council - in general, as a result of the sectarian attitude towards modernity and the world outside the Church that had motivated and been reproduced by the school, and in terms of the totalisation of the school to the exclusion of other thinkers from the tradition and the experiences of non-European cultures. This caused the re-drafting of texts which initially would have enshrined Thomism as the primary methodology of the Council in ways which placed greater emphasis on other methodologies such as biblical exegesis.[17] Finally, the ecclesiology of the Council shifted away from the neo-Thomist 'top-down' model of spiritual-juridical relation in a rigid and unilateral hierarchy to a more "concentric" one, with Christ at the centre and no difference in 'vertical' relation to him corresponding to juridical hierarchy between its members (Odozor, 2003: 22).

However, this development was ambivalent in certain ways. For example, this 'opening up' was also tempered by a re-affirmation of the authority of the Magisterium. *Lumen gentium* §25 requires a "religious submission of mind" to the Pope and his magisterium – indeed in a way privileged over other figures in the Church. Similarly, debate remained around the 'horizontalizing' of authority in the Church – even among some of the theologians who were once censured as a result of presenting the very challenges that were now being enshrined in the documents of the Council (particularly one Joseph Ratzinger) (Boersma, 2009: 10-11).

[16] For an even-handed, critical appraisal of the motivations and task of *aggiornamento* on this front, see Roche (1965).

[17] Komonchak (1998) gives a detailed overview of these dynamics. Routhier (2017) argues that this reconfiguration runs even deeper than the renewal of the method of the Council, which reframed not only its responses to the questions of the day, but its conception of those questions themselves.

Furthermore, Alberigo notes that all councils have been followed by a "complex and somewhat lengthy period of tensions caused by readjustments in the life of the Church", with the more influential councils having the longest such periods (1985: 5). In this regard, the Second Vatican Council is no exception. Indeed, the Council itself was the product of conditions that defy any simple resolution of the issues which it sought to address: for example, one of the features of the council was a haphazard alliance of a number of quite diverse theological positions in order to overcome the reactionary hegemony that had arisen after Vatican I. This was "too heterogeneous a group to have a vision of its own".[18] Moreover, the Fathers in attendance from both sides were predominantly from Central Europe, and educated prior to WWII. As a result, the council was characterised by "an unresolved tension" between the theological themes which arose between the war and the council on the one hand, and the themes and issues brought about by the very holding of the council itself on the other (1985: 11).[19] In this context, the process of *reception* of the council has been a process of *interpretation*, at the level of both "official" teaching and "unofficial" theology on the part of the wider Church (Pottmeyer, 1987: 29). The upshot of this situation was a certain amount of confusion as to what the nature of Catholic moral theology properly ought to be.

This was exacerbated by the later controversy over Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae vitae.* In 1966, the Commission for the Study of Population, Family and Birth voted "by a heavy majority" for a revision of Church teachings with regards to contraception. This was further supported by the cardinals and bishops. However, in 1968, *Humane Vitae* affirmed just the opposite. This raised a question with regards to the nature of the Magisterium: against prior understandings of a unilateral Magisterium, the Pope had previously expressed a need for the commission to establish the degree of certainty required in order to pronounce authoritatively on the issue. However, he seemed to have gone on to ignore its findings. This not only raised questions about Papal authority and the role of lay expertise, but also came

[18] This also means that it would be wrong to read the Council in terms of a clear transition from Neo-Scholasticism to some other methodology, or to think that this new methodology constituted a single unity. Foley and Bergant (2003) identify at least three distinct methodological "flows" which left their mark on the Council's documents, including Neo-Scholasticism.

[19] Schloesser (2006) notes a number of these factors, including the fragmentation of the world into disparate political entities, alongside the polarisation of the new political field between two superpowers; a new post-colonial consciousness; a post-holocaust awareness of the evils and dangers of antisemitism, and the need for a conciliatory theology and politics; a recognition of the choice between totalitarianism and democracy, and an accompanying need for a theology that affirms freedom of religion; modernity's revelation of the temporality of human culture; and a post-war mentality of existential anxiety and atheism.

to be read as "the symbol of a takeback of important things that had happened in Vatican II" (McCormick, 1994: 10). This threw issues around authority, dissent, obedience and the role of conscience into sharp relief.

Moreover, the debate around sexual ethics in *Humanae vitae* also touched on meta-ethical questions, including those around proportionalism; and the debate around proportionalism fell along similar lines to that about the extent of the powers of the ordinary magisterium, with those opposing proportionalism generally advocating a more expansive authority (Hoose, 1987: 15). Additionally, Murray notes a consistent theme in John Paul II's teachings of the Church as "the *diakonia of truth*"[20] (or more specifically, objective, universal truth), under threat from a secular society with a relativistic culture. *VS* reads the positions which it attacks as particular incarnations of this threat (2006: 171). It is therefore significant that *Veritatis Splendor* presents an integrated front against both proportionalism and magisterial minimalism - as well as revisionist sexual ethics, through what Lash identifies as an implicit preoccupation with specifically sexual norms (Lash, 1994: 23). In doing so, it fights multiple, integrated battles in many registers, against a foe that it reads as at once unified and diverse.[21]

In this context, *Veritatis Splendor* can be seen as a unilateral attempt to haul the discipline 'back on track', by re-establishing criteria for such progress, and constraining work in moral theology to them. Firstly, *VS* can be understood in the context of a broader "'Polish view' of theology" that is characteristic of Karol Wotyla's (pre-papal) thought, and with which continuity is borne out in John Paul II's teachings (Hebblethwaite, 1980: 123). Post-Conciliar Polish theology, and Karol Wotyla more specifically, emphasised a centralising view of the Magisterium against (what was identified as) Western trends towards "'false irenicism',

[20] *Fides et Ratio* (§2, 6); in Murray (2006: 168)

[21] This contextualisation may shed light on the overextension of the generality of moral precepts identified by Porter (see above): the encyclical is not solely concerned with the issue of moral universality as such, but also with the cultural issue of the use of (and obedience to) these precepts in our ethical deliberation, which is enshrined in Catholic culture, and which is threatened by secular culture. Ethical deliberation which admits the universality of these precepts will lead to behaviour in obedience to them. Similarly, a more general precept will obtain in more cases, and therefore *also* provide more opportunities for this culturally significant obedience-behaviour. In this cultural context, both universalisation and generalisation of the precepts have superficially similar outcomes, and are therefore liable to be confused. In a similar vein, Porter notes that casuist theologians who recognised this indeterminacy "were accused of being laxists" (1995: 209). However, she points out, this approach to moral law is not intrinsically laxist: the difficulty she identifies with more generalising applications of norms is not that of *following* said norms, but of their *interpretation* (1995: 210). Nevertheless, on a behavioural-cultural level, these are superficially similar: both constitute 'difficulties', and might ultimately lead to behaviours which might run counter to expectations garnered by more naïve interpretations of the law.

'humanism' and even 'secularism'", into which the Church had slipped following the Council (1980: 107). This gives sense to its negative-affective dimensions: the document is premised upon a reading of the trends against which John Paul II writes as a degeneration of the Catholic moral tradition. Secondly, John Paul's response is an echo of Pope Paul VI's response to the controversy around *Humanae vitae* thirty years before: a "concrete exercise of Papal authority", and in it a decisive statement about the nature of that authority after the Council – a statement, moreover, with overtones of a "return" to a more pre-conciliar authoritarianism (Gaillardetz, 2015: 14).

We ought not, however, to take this in an unnuanced way: for example, Mudge notes that *VS* differs from the previous encyclical tradition, which primarily just demanded acceptance of its propositions. In contrast, *VS* argues for its positions, and treats the objects of its criticism, in some detail. This opens the possibility for constructive response, "at least in principle" (1996: 160), which seems like a gesture towards a multilateral approach.

However, we should distinguish between merely giving an account of one's position, and also seeking for others to engage in that account. Indeed, we might say that *VS* makes use of the longstanding unilateral character of the genre in order to foreclose this possibility.

On this point, we should note two things: firstly, Mudge also writes that "it is not clear that the Pope expects, or would welcome, any invitation to further discussion" (1996: 160). Here we must recognise the significance of the encyclical genre itself. Particularly after the controversy around *Humane Vitae*, a central concern in Catholic moral theology has been the question of moral authority itself (Wildes, 1994: 15). As Pius XII stated in *Humanae generis* §20, encyclicals demand the assent (whatever precisely this might mean) of Catholic readers, even though they lack infallibility (1994: 16). As Wildes notes, *VS,* in employing the encyclical genre to make its intervention, inscribes issues of 'proportionalism' and 'teleologism' within this economy of authority, raising the question of whether moral theologians are permitted to explore them any further (1994: 22). To go further than Wildes, in reproducing the exercise of power that concerns moral theologians with questions of authority, *VS* raises questions about the proper response to its own intervention – a question which it answers in embodying the encyclical form: theologians are required to 'assent' to it. In other words, although it offers an argument that at least in principle invites a multilateral approach, it does so in a way that commands the adoption of a unilateral one; in effect, its invitation is an invitation to submit.

Moreover, the fact that *VS* speaks from an authority enshrined within the encyclical form by an encyclical itself (*Humani generis)* further affirms this unilateral dynamic: because *VS* and *Humani generis* share the same authority as encyclicals, when the former tacitly cites the authority of the latter to underpin its own authority, this is effectively a self-citation. As a result, the invitation identified by Mudge arises from a reflexive circle of authority which thus functions unilaterally. This must be assumed as the condition of any response, which must consequently be limited by the unilateral parameters of that condition. This is also repeated when the encyclical cites other encyclicals for support of its specific positions, such as its rejection of a decision-making capacity in conscience in §60, which invokes *Dominum et Vivificantem* §43.

Likewise, magisterial documents can be reinterpreted and built upon as time passes.[22] *VS* itself illustrates this, for example in its frequent citations of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which recontextualises them as part of a case against 'teleologism', as well as more generally reading them against certain methodological transformations that arose in response to other interpretations. However, the 'official' locus of this process lies in further magisterial documents – something which is also illustrated by *VS* in its nominally decisive reinterpretative intervention. This involves two further unilateral dynamics. Firstly, within this process, the unilateral interpretative authority of the magisterium is ultimately privileged over all others – it is only another magisterial document that can decisively reinterpret the prior tradition. Secondly, this also reproduces the self-citing dynamic above: if this power to reinterpret lies in the magisterial tradition, then this interpretive power lies specifically in the document that is doing the reinterpretation at the given moment in time. When it was published, this privilege rested upon *VS* itself. Consequently, its publication specifically *as* a magisterial document is in itself a reflexive assertion of a privileged authority which, by virtue of this privilege, ultimately operates unilaterally.

Our second consideration is that, regardless of its nominal appeal to an engageable argument,, the upshot of *VS* is to preclude any discussion of the nature of moral norms beyond the determinations of the Magisterium. As such, even if *VS* can serve as an object for

[22] Note that this reinterpretation is not reducible to falsification – there are many familiar words that we might use to describe other forms, such as moderation, recontextualizing, deepening, and translating. Indeed, the assumption that reinterpretation amounts to falsification may itself embody a paranoid anticipation of threat.

multilateral engagement, it seeks to set up the 'tradition crisis' more generally for unilateral resolution.

In a similar vein, Laghi notes that, while the encyclical was received in some camps as analogous to "a commander intent upon imposing order on his soldiers" (1996: 2), the theology presented within the encyclical portrays this 'order' as intrinsic to the nature of what is being ordered (i.e. moral theology, and by extension the activities of those working within the field). "Seen within this perspective", he writes, "it is difficult to place *Veritatis Splendor* within [this] military imagery", which portrays order as something imposed from without (1996: 6). What Laghi fails to recognise, however, is that this imagery is illuminative at a more fundamental level: soldiers, as an intrinsic feature of their role, are subject to the authority of their commander. As such, we might say that VS construes moral theology as analogous to soldiers awaiting the direction of their superiors. In this context, it is not so much an imposition of authority as an induction of moral theology into (or reminder of the place of moral theology within) the ranks such that this direction is invited. The term 'conscription', with its roots in the Latin *cōnscrībō*[23] is appropriate here: the Magisterium 'writes' moral theology *as* a discipline, such that moral theologians find themselves always-already constrained by conditions inscribed into its very constitution. The authoritarian gesture of VS lies in the *unilateral* nature of its assumption of this kind of authority. And it is precisely *because* this response is a unilateral one that *Veritatis Splendor* must do this through anticipatory *determination* in reference to a *totalised* and *absolutized* set of co-ordinates.

3. FIVE PARANOID QUESTIONS

We can see these paranoid sensibilities exemplified in some of the tensions which Francis has faced in the course of his papacy - most notably in the infamous *dubia,* published in 2016 by four Cardinals (Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, and Cardinal Joachim Meisner), questioning particular aspects of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.[24]

Cardinal Burke, in an interview with the *National Catholic Register,* claims that there "are a number of other questions as well, but these five critical points have to do with irreformable moral principles" (in Pentin, 2016a: Online). He describes the situation as one of "tremendous division" in the Church, and claims that the focus on these particular questions

[23] *"To put together in writing, to draw up, compose, write"* (Lewis and Short, 1879: Online)
[24] Hereafter, *AL*

is down to the fact that they are "fundamental moral questions which unify us" (in Pentin, 2016a: Online).

Whether or not the divisions are as dramatic as Burke would portray them is another question. They are certainly heightened. Christopher Lamb, writing for the *Tablet,* claims that, to the contrary, "the vast majority of Catholics are fully behind Francis' reform program" - which in this context refers to the controversial possibility of re-admitting divorced and remarried Catholics to communion intimated in note 351 attached to *AL* §305 (2017: 6). Either way, these represent very real points of conflict between Francis and certain elements within the Church, which have been highlighted by his critics as holding great significance with regards to their understanding of the faith.

3.1. THE *DUBIA*

The *dubia* themselves are:

1. **It is asked whether, following the affirmations of Amoris Laetitia (300-305), it has now become possible to grant absolution in the sacrament of penance and thus to admit to holy Communion [sic] a person who, while bound by a valid marital bond, lives together with a different person more uxorio without fulfilling the conditions provided for by Familiaris Consortio, 84, and subsequently reaffirmed by Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, 34, and Sacramentum Caritatis, 29. Can the expression "in certain cases" found in Note 351 (305) of the exhortation Amoris Laetitia be applied to divorced persons who are in a new union and who continue to live more uxorio?**

2. **After the publication of the post-synodal exhortation Amoris Laetitia (304), does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical Veritatis Splendor, 79, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, on the existence of absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts and that are binding without exceptions?**

3. **After Amoris Laetitia (301) is it still possible to affirm that a person who habitually lives in contradiction to a commandment of God's law, as for instance the one that prohibits adultery (Matthew 19:3-9), finds him or herself in an objective situation of grave habitual sin (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, "Declaration," June 24, 2000)?**

4. **After the affirmations of Amoris Laetitia (302) on "circumstances which mitigate moral responsibility," does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical Veritatis Splendor, 81, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, according to which "circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act 'subjectively' good or defensible as a choice"?**

5. **After Amoris Laetitia (303) does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical Veritatis Splendor, 56, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, that excludes a creative interpretation of the role of conscience and that emphasizes that conscience can never be authorized to legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts by virtue of their object?**

(Pentin, 2016b: Online)

Together, these questions touch on a wide range of issues,[25] and there is a lot that can be said about them on this front. However for the purposes of our analysis, we will firstly look to the *dubia* themselves as an example of paranoid methodology in Catholic theology. In doing so, we will come to appreciate how they can be situated in the context of the tradition of paranoia established in documents like *VS.* We will then focus on the fifth *dubia*, which references the discussion around the nature of conscience in *VS* that we discussed earlier. In attending more closely to this *dubia*, we will see how its authors build upon the groundwork for a paranoid methodology that we saw being laid in *VS.*[26]

3.2. *DUBIA* AS PARANOID WRITING PRACTICE

A common theme running throughout all five *dubia* is the anxiety that *AL* contradicts several papal encyclicals written by John Paul II. In this regard, they anticipate and reproduce the very readings of *Amoris Laetitia* that they seek to problematise. Although this is done in the hope of correction through 'clarification', we might also identify this as paranoid mimesis, outlining and thus reproducing the threat in anticipation of its encounter in the case that these readings are indeed the intended ones. Moreover, we might ask what this 'clarification' would amount to. If the cardinals expected a retraction bound up in minimising language,

[25] For a more detailed exposition of this, see the *Exaplanatory Note* (Pentin, 2016b: Online).
[26] Note that identifying this logic says nothing about the validity or force of their arguments – merely that they represent a movement to defend paranoid hermeneutics within moral theology, against what we will come to understand as a more reparative one.

then the text itself is paranoid in itself insofar as it is identifying a range of possible bad interpretations without a real view to the possibility of good interpretations.

This paranoid characterisation gains weight when we recognise that the document is only interested in first order concerns – does *Amoris Laetitia* contradict passage *x* in document *y*? *Dubia* form lends itself to this kind of reflection: the demand of a closed answer leaves no room to explore second order concerns (such as the nature of 'continuity' and 'tradition', or 'moral value', and how it inheres in things) in which the issues raised may be dissolved. Thus the genre also potentially implies a tacit affirmation of a particular framework for doing theology, thereby situating itself as a practice arising out of the context of a strong theory which it seeks to maintain.

In other words, the *dubia* can be read as an example of paranoid reflexivity, whereby paranoia *absolutises* itself by positing itself as the condition for understanding. In this vein, if the *dubia* themselves are an example of paranoia, we might further identify the paranoid reading practices within the *dubia* themselves as reflexively indicative of the paranoia of the system of thought from which they arise. Thus the act of presenting the *dubia* itself can be interpreted as a kind of paranoid *praxis*. On this point, we noted above that magisterial documents embody a citation of their own privileged authority at the moment of their publication. In reducing the interpretive question to one of continuity with the first-order positions outlined in documents such as *VS,* the *dubia* establish these documents as the interpretive measure for *AL*.[27] In doing so, they recentre this privileged authority in the prior documentary tradition. This undercuts the power of *AL* to re-read and re-interpret them, returning them to unilateral power and bestowing the *absoluteness* this entails upon the theological positions outlined within them, and which the dubia seek to simultaneously defend and deploy to interpret the world. Thus, more specifically, the paranoid theorising of the dubia cites and return us to the paranoid economy of these original texts.

This paranoid characterisation is reinforced when we consider the *dubia* in terms of motivation. We noted above how the *dubia* genre implicitly reinforces particular positions which their objects otherwise problematise. To this end, we might say that *dubia* are both

[27] Of course, a hierarchy exists within magisterial documents, and encyclicals such as *VS* outrank apostolic exhortations such as *AL* within this. My point is not so much that we can account for why this hermeneutic may be appropriate, but rather the fact that it is invoked in the first place. Note also the exclusive focus on the question of falsification; a framing in which this hierarchy functions primarily in terms of a combative 'trumping' of one type of document by another, or a heuristic for navigating situations which are assumed from the outset to be ones of threat and challenge.

reactive and defensive: they presuppose a situation in which a status quo is being threatened, and represent a move to defend that status quo. It bears reiterating here (as we have throughout) that paranoid hermeneutics such as that implicit in the *dubia* are neither problematic in all cases, nor lacking in their own virtues. Moreover, we are not trying to say here that the Cardinals' motivations are not virtuous or understandable.

Such a defensive manoeuvre need not be reduced to a reactionary defence of habit. However, it equally can have theological meaning beyond merely theoretical concern for issues such as continuity of tradition, or the nature of teaching authority. Charles Curran illustrates the significance of this point when he recounts the story of a colleague at the Catholic University of America. This colleague had spent the better part of his life defending conservative positions on various topics in Catholic moral teaching. In this context, the truth of these positions took on an eschatological and theodical significance: surely God would not have allowed him to become so mislead as to devote his life to inadvertently hurting people (1992: 19)?

What this story illustrates is that adopting a theological position involves making an existential commitment not only to the principles affirmed in that position, but also with regards to the project of maintaining and promoting that position. This latter commitment can only be made on the basis of implicit claims about the nature of the individual's life of faith, and the validity of these claims can be threatened when that commitment is challenged. Thus defence of that commitment, which can include by extension the defence of the theological positions around which it arises, has a theological significance beyond those commitments themselves.

Reading the *dubia* in light of Curran's story brings to our attention a specific pastoral issue attached to the clash of hermeneutical stances embodied within them (which may or may not be present in the case of the Cardinals, but is a general possibility). For Curran's colleague, the falsity of his ethical positions implies not just his being wrong about ethics, but the collapse of his entire theological *gestalt*, throwing into doubt fundamental issues such as God's goodness, and the security of one's relationship with God in such a way as to necessitate a radical reconfiguration of his entire existential worldview. Indeed, it is questionable whether such a reconfiguration would even have been 'thinkable' within his worldview, presupposing as it did certain truths about these issues which would have been problematised in its course.

The possibility of one's life-project being so fundamentally wrong that one cannot even account for or anticipate this wrongness within it, gives rise to a fundamental theological anxiety that moves quickly into despair: how can we live in light of the possibility of condemnation by something that we are not even capable of thinking of, which therefore precludes anticipation or any other kind of security?[28] We might read this anxiety-inducing indeterminacy as the face of the unforeseen 'bad surprise' that paranoia seeks to ward off through its reflexive operation (which seems very understandable in this context). By contrast, a dire mistakenness in a newly authored, supposedly authoritative text is a risk that can at least be conceived.

3.3. CONSCIENCE AGAIN

Moreover, the texts that they invoke themselves might be understood as paranoid texts. In the context of the final *dubium*, this is *VS.* More specifically, it is *VS* on the topic of conscience, wherein (as we saw previously) it lays the ground for paranoid theological methodology.

The *explanatory note* frames the *dubium* as responding to the claim in *Amoris Laetitia* §303 that "conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God." (Pentin, 2016b: Online).

The *dubium* juxtaposes this against the condemnation in *Veritatis Splendor* §56 of understandings of conscience whereby it "could legitimately be the basis of certain exceptions to the general rule and thus permit one to do in practice and in good conscience what is qualified as intrinsically evil by the moral law". This juxtaposition is framed by questioning the continued authority of *Veritatis Splendor* itself, thereby rendering this issue in part one of continuity, as with the previous *dubium* (Pentin, 2016b: Online).

We saw previously that *Veritatis Splendor* condemns understandings of human freedom as in opposition to the divine law. In this context, it condemns models of conscience under which it operates as "a creative and responsible acceptance of the personal tasks entrusted to [the person] by God", and thus can permit the rejection of putatively universal moral norms (§55). In these cases, human freedom, represented by conscience, would be in conflict

[28] The discussion of this *par excellence* is Kierkegaard (1980).

with those norms. In contrast, for *VS,* the conscience can only work deductively, representing particular situations under a limited set of universal norms.

In line with *Veritatis Splendor,* the explanatory note for the *dubium* states that such a consideration of conscience

> **...would mean to conceive of conscience as a faculty for autonomously deciding about good and evil and of God's law as a burden that is arbitrarily imposed and that could at times be opposed to our true happiness.**
>
> **However.... The proper act of conscience is to judge and not to decide. It says, "This is good." "This is bad." This goodness or badness does not depend on it. It acknowledges and recognizes the goodness or badness of an action, and for doing so… conscience needs criteria; it is inherently dependent on truth.**

(Pentin, 2016b: Online)

In this context, it seeks reassurance that the passage in question does not legitimate such a "creative" conception of conscience, whereby acts can be justified by conscience without reference to the objective law.

We saw previously how the understanding of conscience promoted in *VS* helps to construct a *determining, totalising,* and *absolutizing* framework for Catholic theology. Firstly, then, in reiterating the teaching of *VS* on this front, the *dubia* reinforces this framework.

However, this takes on an additional significance in the context of the paranoid nature of *dubia* as genre. Precisely in being presented as the unexamined premise of the *dubia,* the teaching is tacitly *absolutized,* and the passage in *AL* which potentially problematises it is cast as a threat – but, ultimately, not a radical one. To put it another way, the *dubia* tacitly begs the question on the part of *VS.* And this question-begging finds its justification in the reflexive teachings of *VS* itself – after all, *AL* cannot possibly present an authentic theological challenge to the teaching of *VS* (let alone a *productive* one) because *VS* is already established as a teaching, and if anything seems to challenge that teaching it is only because we are fallible enough to think so.

4. Conclusion

Understanding the controversy around Francis' teachings as a conflict between paranoid and reparative hermeneutical stances reveals a significant complication to resolving these debates. On the one hand, the reactive camp is epistemologically and existentially

committed to the self-enclosed logic of its paranoid hermeneutic. On the other, this self-confirming logic implies that any challenge must *a priori* be false, negating the possibility of any real disagreement. Thus if the other party *does* disagree, they must refuse to engage with this logic at all, and thus the arguments arising from it. In this vein, at the time of writing, Francis has yet to respond to the *dubia*.

The upshot of this is that the discussion founders between two positions that are fundamentally committed to talking past one another. This is exemplified in the claim popular among Catholics who would align themselves with the Cardinals that Francis' teachings in *Amoris Laetitia* are sowing "confusion". Richard McCormick would describe this as a tactic of "moral evasion", which is problematic because it implies that the correct response to the issue is merely to reiterate the teachings which are in themselves the objects of dispute (1994: 124-5) – a reflexively self-confirming, paranoid response. In this vein, with regards to the admission of divorced and remarried Catholics to communion, there are a number of senior parties within the Church who support the readings of Amoris Laetitia which the Cardinals resist.[29] As such, to claim that this reading is 'confused' is to ignore the fact that it is a clearly staked position afforded significant authority in various circles.

Sedgwick argues that, in recognising the rigid bounds of paranoid readings, we can come to glimpse alternative possibilities: recognising the self-confirming logic of paranoid hermeneutics, and the way in which they *determine* our knowledge, opens up a space of imagination in which we can come to think beyond them (2003: 146). In this vein, articulating the second-order issues upon which the substantive disagreements at hand turn allows us to cut through the mutual non-engagement, and thus present the supposedly 'confused' positions in an intelligible way. In other words, in articulating these issues we can come to see the power of Francis' alternative *as* an alternative, rather than a source of tension within, and therefore ultimately to be negated by the reflexive mechanisms of paranoia.

However, this does not in itself overcome the existential problem faced by Curran's colleague, and potentially indicated by the *dubia*. Indeed, we have to admit that the Church,

[29] To a greater or lesser extent of permissiveness in interpretation, these include Bishop Robert McElroy of Sandiago (2016); Rome's Vicar, Cardinal Agosto Vallini (2016); the German Bishops' Conference (2017); President of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio (2017); Cardinal Martíne Sistach of Spain (2017); the Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo (2017); and the Bishops of Buenos Aires (2017). It is also worth noting that Pope Francis himself, in a leaked letter, appeared to endorse this last interpretation (San Martín, 2016: Online). For an extensive multi-regional overview of the reception and interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia,* see Keenan (2017).

and individuals within it, has supported various evils in its time, and that history might judge any of us to be among them. Moreover, the apparent necessity of a paranoid response in the face of this threat might indicate that it is one which Francis' critics struggle to tolerate. In this vein, one achievement on the part of Francis' theology which would both serve to de-escalate the conflict, and also unproblematically appeal to both camps, would be if it could somehow provide a way to cope with this threat. This thesis will argue that Francis indeed does this. In doing so, he facilitates the reception of his teachings, and thus engagement with the substantive issues upon which the contentions about his theology turn.

We noted previously that the question of uncertainty constitutes a significant portion of the epistemological-affective issue of hermeneutics, which we have argued serves as a powerful framework for reading Francis. There is thus an additional significance to focusing on the issue of uncertainty in our reading of Francis. It will demonstrate how a reparative hermeneutic is more appropriate to the life of faith as presented in this theology than a paranoid one. In doing so, it will show how various first-order positions encountered within his teachings derive from a sophisticated and (hopefully) compelling navigation of various second-order philosophical and theological questions. This will enable the recognition of the non-*totality* of whatever Francis might be seen to challenge, thereby opening the possibility of a reception of Francis' teachings across this divide.

To summarise, then: the task of this thesis is to provide a systematic and holistic reading of Francis' teachings, in a way that indicates their interrelation and overall sense. In doing so, it will facilitate the reception of those teachings, which otherwise appear disparate and sometimes individually confusing. Our thesis statement is that Francis presents a *reparative* hermeneutic for Catholic theology. This bears out a tension with existing *paranoid* methodologies, which anticipatorily negate anything outside of their self-totalised scope. In articulating Francis' alternative, we will demonstrate the *possibility of* this alternative, thereby challenging the assumed *totality* of Catholic paranoia, and facilitating the recognition and reception of his reparative vision. This, of course, is not the same thing as an *acceptance* of those teachings, and this apologetic project lies outside the scope of this thesis.

However, in order to do this, there are a number of methodological issues with which we must first contend. They all revolve around the *prima facie* simple task of 'reading Francis', particularly in the context of a systematic approach. This issue is treated in the next chapter.

II. READING FRANCIS

1. THREE METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES, AND ONE MISUNDERSTANDING

The last chapter indicated how some of the controversy over Francis' teachings stems from a conflict between paranoid tendencies in Catholic theology, and the more reparative approach indicated in documents like *Amoris Laetitia.* This poses a problem with regards to reception, which is exacerbated by the plurality of narratives according to which Francis' teachings are significant. The solution, we argued, would be to construct a systematic and holistic reading of his teachings in order to indicate their overall sense as well as their consistency, such that they can disrupt the totality of existing Catholic paranoia.

While this should facilitate the *reception* of his teachings, it is worth noting that this is not the same thing as an *acceptance* of those teachings. At least as I use the term here, we can receive something *critically,* which involves the possibility of rejection. Reception is a process of hearing and understanding, or of 'giving space' to the other. It is not, however, a process of total, uncritical accommodation.[30]

This established, there are three primary methodological issues involved in our project: firstly, that of specifically reading texts by 'Pope Francis', in the context of a disrupted authorship; secondly, that of reading a body of texts systematically when they do not present themselves as such; and thirdly, selecting sources in the context of unequal authority across those sources. Additionally, there is one potential misunderstanding about the nature of this project which ought to be anticipated. This chapter will treat each of these in turn.

1.1. THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

The first of these relates to the question of authorship. As we argue below, 'Francis' cannot be approached simply as an historical figure to whom we have access through the mediation of texts. Rather, the complex nature of 'Francis' as authorship necessitates a specific hermeneutical approach.

[30] In fact, we will see this idea at work in Francis' theology itself later on.

1.1.1. DECENTRED AUTHORSHIP

1.1.1.1. THE PROBLEM OF "POPE FRANCIS"

Firstly, the nature of Francis' authorship raises questions about whether fidelity in the sense of 'original intention' would even be possible. Francis' thought, as we receive it, is often mediated by various disseminators. The clearest example of this are the many books which have been published under his name, but are third-party syntheses of extracts from diverse sources into longer reflections on particular topics.[31] These texts stand in a strange authorial limbo: they are not fully primary texts insofar as they are essentially constructed by an editor from cut up parts of the primary texts proper, like combining multiple jigsaws to make bigger jigsaws of different designs. In this sense, the text is obviously heavily interpreted, but it is presented as if it were a primary text, and the interpretation is hidden behind its own method: rather than being a standard *descriptive* interpretation, the interpretation lies in the presentation itself. However, equally, they are not fully secondary sources (or even anthologies) insofar as they are composed entirely of primary text, without explanation, interpretation beyond the constructive process, or analysis (beyond short, superficial discursive introductions often by figures in the Church).

Similarly for media reports: these are often written by individuals with little or no wider theological training, who pick up on particular aspects but give no sense of the whole, or how those aspects relate to it.[32] These kind of reports effectively serve to decontextualize Francis' thought, and situate it in a new context constructed out of their understanding of the theological situation. This decontextualisation takes place in the mind of the reporter, who may very well be less theologically aware than we might otherwise desire: what they pick up on is *already* decontextualized as they are not equipped to receive it in context, and this process is then further repeated as they commit it to paper, often in an abbreviated form.[33]

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[31] e.g. Pope Francis (2014), (2015d), (2016g), (2016f)

[32] To further complicate matters, in the words of Vatican Spokesman, Frederico Lombardi, Francis has introduced "a genre to which we were not accustomed" to the various forms of Papal communication: the "conversational" form, or 'off-the-cuff remark' (Rocca, 2013: Online). Given the lack of opportunity for revision on Francis' part, as well as the fact that they are generally given directly to the media who are then responsible for their dissemination, they are particularly difficult to interpret in terms of the systematic whole. However, to the extent that they are unmediated by the normal official regulative structures, we might see them as more strongly aligned with the Pope's personal capacity, and thus inappropriate as sources for this essay.

[33] Beyond newspaper reports, another example of texts to which this applies might be the various collections of Francis' Morning Homilies (Pope Francis, 2015c; 2016c; 2016d; 2016e; 2018b). These books are anthologies of reports from *L'Osservatorio Romana*, which present them to the wider public in gloss form.

Finally, Francis has given numerous interviews. Perhaps the most famous of these is Spadaro (2013: Online). The most infamous is undoubtedly Scalfari (2018: Online), in which Francis supposedly denies the existence of hell (Pentin, 2018: Online). Beyond the obvious issues of fidelity raised by the latter example, Spadaro has been styled in some camps as a "papal puppet master" who directs the Pope's speech (Gibson, 2016: Online). This extreme claim nevertheless reveals the active role of the interviewer in constructing the Papal authorial figure through re-presenting the words of the historical person beyond the context of the original discussion.

What we thus receive as "Francis'" theology is actually an array of heavily mediated ideas, derived from a variety of sources. This is complicated further by the fact that the figure of Francis himself as we receive it is already mediated to us by a complex already-existing process of reception, involving factors such as "the expectations of people, followers, and the varied opinions regarding the church's course, and the transformation of different social and geopolitical scenes". Thus in receiving Francis the person, we are also receiving "a scaffolding of circumstances, signifiers and developments that greatly exceed him as the individual" (Panotto, 2018a: xxii).[34] Together, these dynamics disrupt the idea of 'Francis the theologian' as an individual figure, giving the lie to any naïve claims of objectivity or hermeneutical innocence.

Born out of the endless aggregation, dissemination, writing and re-writing of texts associated with the name, we might even go as far as to say that "Francis" is a *simulacrum*, or a signifier the meaning of which proliferates independently of the real. Baudrillard argues that, prior to our current historical moment, people conceived of signifiers as 'exchangeable' for an external or 'deeper' reality in which the meaning of the sign could be located. However, he argues that, in our late-capitalist society, thought is born of the play of signifiers unmoored from any connection to the real; a "hyperreal" exchange of signifiers for other signifiers (1994: 2). He locates this economy particularly in the media, which produces, reproduces, and trades exclusively in virtual images, delivering this meaning to individuals independently of the historical events that they ostensibly portray. Likewise, when we receive 'Francis', it is always through this kind of virtual exchange, in the media images, advertising, and propaganda[35] that outstrip the reality of any historical person.

[34] For an overview of these dynamics in an Argentinian context, see Panotto (2018b).

[35] Compare Francis' novel public performance of authentic, approachable personality (for example, by touching people, carrying his own suitcase, telling jokes, making references to his native Argentina and its culture, and particularly his rejection of 'impersonal' and 'removed' ceremony) to the image

This is not, of course, to say that there is no Francis qua historical individual. Rather, *the figure whom we receive* in the various texts associated with his authorship (and perhaps in general) is less this historical person as expressed through them, and more an expression of those texts themselves. 'Francis' is a product of their multifaceted composition, reception, and the meaning-making capacity of the signifiers from which they are both constituted and are in themselves. Perhaps the clearest example of this lies in the way in which historicising readings must 'access' the historical figure to which they attempt to reduce this meaning through books and media interviews, or (for the lucky few) 'personal' meetings that are in actuality carefully managed and heavily propagandised.[36]

In the absence of the real for which his texts can be exchanged, we must adopt a different approach for interpreting Francis. Rather than the recovery of some 'true meaning' as the real 'behind' the texts, to engage with his theology means entering into this process, becoming an *active* aggregator and *creative* disseminator.. This undercuts intuitive questions about 'true interpretation' and 'fidelity' to Francis' intentions: that truth and those intentions themselves are the product of the signs that we seek to interpret, rather than a Real that they signify. In this context, the question is merely one of whether we enter into the process consciously or not.

These factors problematise naïve hermeneutical approaches that seek to simply identify Francis' texts with a unified historical figure. In this vein, this thesis attempts to approach Francis' documents at a distance from Francis the historical individual. While this may make it a little more methodologically complicated, this also perhaps makes the project more exciting. In the absence of a single body of thought, instead we are confronted with a disparate *movement* in the Church and its theology. We have what might broadly be described as a 'Francis Phenomenon' occurring in the life of the Church which gives rise to a '(Pope) Franciscan School' of thought, bound by common themes and sources. This arguably presents a more authoritative basis for its theology than if it were to come from a single figure: the Church is a collective, and it thinks as such. A movement is far more convincingly identified as the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit or *Sensus Fidei* than an individual figure.

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of "real" America', which hides its hyperreality through contradistinction to the self-consciously dreamlike "deterrence machine" that is Disneyland (1994: 12).

[36] We will argue that, for Francis, there is something in an interpersonal encounter which transcends reduction to images. However, this irreducible interpersonal factor equally resists thematization more broadly, and so is not something that can be articulated in an essay – hence the biographer is still trapped among the simulacra.

Furthermore, as we shall see, Francis emphasises that the Holy Spirit operates through novel and creative ways, faithfully leading the Church down a nevertheless unpredictable path. This opens up a space in the theological enterprise for properly creative theology: if good theology is theology which follows the Spirit, and if the Spirit is creative, then theology will have to be similarly creative in its own way in order to keep up. The disruption of a central 'author' figure, to whom fidelity can be owed in such a way that creativity is restricted, gives a certain freedom for a self-aware creativity in my interpretation. As someone who will be adding to the textual substance of this phenomenon through my (admittedly explicit) interpretative work, I cannot help doing so. Moreover, in the absence of an 'author figure' to cleave to in my interpretation, I cannot help but acknowledge the presence of, and inevitability of such creative action. In this context, a theologian who truly wants to contribute to the Church in an honest way can only embrace their creative role, abandoning any pretension to fidelity beyond that required to approach the sources non-arbitrarily, in favour of a self-conscious attempt to assemble something *good* out of it. As such, I am unafraid to 'fill in' gaps which I identify in the thought arising from the Francis phenomenon, or recast ideas in order to make them better express the broader spirit arising from the texts.

Finally, it is questionable whether anything is lost in the rejection of historicising approaches. Cartagenas draws from Ricoeur to argue that interpretation is always a dialectical relation between the configuration of the text by the author, and its reconfiguration by the reader. In this context, the fact that Church teaching is disseminated in the form of magisterial *texts* means that it "escapes the finite horizons lived by its respective authors". Because they are received across time, and by a community of readers that exceeds the context of individual language use in which it was authored, they have a measure of "semantic autonomy" from this moment of authorship. For example, Leo XIII never anticipated the ways in which his call for organised labour in *Rerum novarum* would serve as the basis for wider social criticism – and indeed this is the reason why these texts can continue to have relevance even when the original events to which they refer have ceased to be (Cartagenas, 2010: 640).

Indeed, we already know that we are not reading a document 'properly' if we reduce its meaning to authorial intention. We expect to be able to apply a teaching document in contexts other than the specific context in which it was formulated. In this vein, John Paul II writes that the Church seeks to provide an "*indispensable and ideal orientation*" around which policy can be formed (*Centesimus Annus* §43), and, although he qualifies this with the claim that it does not seek to provide particular technical solutions and policy

recommendations, it nevertheless can only do so based on particular generalisable principles and ideas. That is, these documents are always written and read in a general context that presupposes the transcendence in their meaning of particular contexts.

The ultimate justification of this project as I see it thus comes from the nature of the Church as revealed by these issues. If we conceive of the Church as a community in which ideas circulate, we cannot divorce the creative dynamics of this circulation from our idea of this community. As such, in participating in this broad creative process with regards to the Francis phenomenon, I am merely participating in this community. That is, at base, what I am doing in this thesis is just Catholicism. The only difference between myself and those that assemble the texts which I have drawn from, and which are consumed by the community, is that I am reflexive with regards to it in the manner laid out above.

1.1.1.2. WHAT IS IN A NAME?

Nevertheless, throughout this thesis I refer to "Francis" as the author of the texts and originator of the thought. There is an argument to be made that, despite problems of authorship, 'Francis' has laid claim to these documents in such a way that they represent his thought as Pope, even if they are not entirely its product. In his book-length interview with Peter Seewald, Benedict XVI discusses Cardinal Joseph Frings' momentous speech to the Second Vatican Council, *Das Konzil auf dem Hintergrund der Zeitlage im Unterschied zum ersten vatikanische Konzil*, which Benedict wrote. He relates a story in which Frings is congratulated for his speech by then Pope John XXIII:

> ***"'Your eminence,' John XXIII said, 'I must thank you… Frings had given voice to everything that he meant for the Council, but was not able to express himself. Frings answered: 'Holy Father, I did not write any of the lecture, a young professor wrote it.' Then the Pope said: 'Mr Cardinal, I did not write my last encyclical myself. It comes down to a matter of where one identifies himself.'"***
>
> (Pope Benedict XVI with Peter Seewald, 2016: 121)

What this indicates is that 'the Pope', in some traditionally substantive way, speaks through the encyclicals to which his name is attached, even if that encyclical is detached from his authorship. [37] Given the necessity of creative reproduction required in approaching

[37] Other examples of this decentred authorship are John Paul II's *Fides et ratio,* which is "widely held to have been penned primarily by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger" (Stollenwerk, 2015: 62); and possibly Pius XII's *Humani generis,* which shows the likely hand of French Dominican theologian, Garrigou-Lagrange (*c.f.* Kerlin, 2007: 111).

encyclicals, such a process thus does not mean losing the sense in which the text is 'the Pope's'. Naturally there is a question about how creative such a reproduction can be before it ceases to be identifiable with the voice of the Pope, but equally authorship is not tied strictly to his pen. Rather, it requires us to reconceive of what it means to be 'the Pope' as the figure whose identity is appended to these documents. 'Francis', in the way that I use the name, is best identified not so much with the figure of Pope Francis himself, but with a certain character and quality of authority possessed by texts which is associated with and perhaps derives from, but is not identical to, this figure.

It is worth noting that there is perhaps even an advantage to this decentring of identity with regards to the authority of the texts (and my interpretations). The notion of the Magisterium refers to both the teaching offices of the Church, and the individuals who inhabit them. This creates an ambiguity with regards to the distinction between the juridical and charismatic authority of those individuals (Odozor, 2003: 192-3). Some commentators have used this distinction to question the authority of certain facets of ostensibly magisterial teaching, characterising them as 'personal' in distinction to 'magisterial'. Indeed, Cardinal Burke does precisely this when he characterises *Amoris Laetitia* as "personal, that is, non-magisterial" due to its lack of references to prior magisterial teaching (2016: Online). By decentring authorship from 'Francis' *qua* historical individual, this disavowed 'personal' dimension is removed. That is, the nature of papal documents is such that they cannot be attributed solely to the 'person' of the Pope, in distinction to the magisterial office.[38]

Moreover, as mentioned above, this decentring of authorship, and necessitation of creativity, short-circuits debates about which interpretations are 'most true' to the 'original' text. If there is no accessible origin, then there is no question about which reading bears out the most fidelity with regards to it. To this end, I have avoided engaging at length with alternative readings in order to present my own as 'truer' than theirs, except where it is enlightening with regards to my wider argument. Instead, my readings are explicitly situated within the holistic form that I identify, and it is from this that they draw their power. Because any 'rival' readings will not be so situated, it is difficult to argue for or against them in relation

[38] Cardinal Burke refers here to the conversations between Pope Paul VI and the French philosopher and theologian Jean Guitton (1967) as an example of the Pope speaking in a 'personal' capacity. He argues that supposed incompatibilities between *Amoris Laetitia* and prior magisterial teaching, along with the absence of references to prior magisterial documents, mean that it can only be interpreted as an exercise of the Pope's personal capacity – any other interpretation would entail error in the magisterium itself at the site of these contradictions.

to my own in an illuminating way – the argument that a reading is worse because it does not fit this whole says nothing directly about that reading other than that it does not fit my project. Conversely, an argument for a reading will only be possible on the basis that it fits the whole, which is a narrow condition that may exclude most readings similarly indirectly. As such, I do not treat these specific hermeneutical debates at length, and rather focus on communicating the holistic vision which, as we have just seen, must be received prior to these debates anyway.[39]

Finally, if you remain unconvinced by the above arguments, this thesis can still be read as a creative extension of Francis' thought in light of the authorial decentralisation that we previously identified in the context of his texts. By re-framing his ideas in a (hopefully) robust and systematic way, this thesis will hopefully indicate the robustness of a particular (specifically, reparative-hermeneutical) way of doing theology, which is already plotted within the co-ordinates of the existing tradition – even if it does not indicate the robustness of "his thought" in a more restrictive sense.

1.1.1.3. A FALSE UNITY?

Conversely, we might be concerned that our reading fails to fully recognise its own implications. This concern lies in our use of the image of a unified 'authorial figure' as such, decentred or otherwise. If we are constructing both 'Francis' and the meaning of his texts in the course of our reading, then perhaps this images engenders and embodies a kind of hermeneutical false-consciousness, presupposing that unity is readily available in the texts prior to our interpretation. Indeed, Foucault (1977) argues that the figure of the author itself serves to locate the meaning of a text within fixed boundaries, against the unlimited capacity for meaning-making in the reading subject. In this context, to cite the figure of 'Francis' (however we specifically conceive of him/it) is potentially to cite the possibility of this unity and fixity, and thereby militate against our creative interpretive project in the process.[40] The

[39] To put it another way, the problematisation of authorship necessitates a certain mastery of the texts in interpretation. This brings us back into contact with the question of reparative versus paranoid hermeneutics. Because of this required mastery, it is difficult to distinguish normatively between either of these hermeneutics as an approach to the texts in question. Moreover, we noted that although we might associate mastery more with paranoid approaches, either hermeneutic can exhibit mastery. As such, although (we shall argue) Francis invokes a reparative vision of theology, this does not directly necessitate either hermeneutic with regards to his own texts. That said, as we also noted, they do embody certain concerns with regards to mastery and motivation ubiquitous to the practice of theology within a tradition more generally. However, in this case these concerns are perhaps best addressed apart from Sedgwick's typology in order to avoid confusing the issue.

[40] We can certainly recognise the way in which these kinds of determining appeals to unity lend themselves to distinctly political ends, for example in constructing a basis for proof-texting which in turn enables the reader to establish boundaries for thought beyond the texts themselves.

image of a 'corpus' of texts may be problematic in the same way, referring to a corporeal unity that also redoubles the problematic imagery of the 'authorial figure' by citing the literal bodily unity of an historical individual.

The first response to these concerns is that these images only function in this way if we forget the necessity of creative interpretation as argued for above. If the authorial figure of 'Francis' is a simulacrum, then its very nature is to generate meaning independently of any such 'deeper' determining principle of identity or textual unity.

However, we might nevertheless worry that these images in some sense introduce an ambivalence towards the possibility for interpretation that cannot be shaken merely by appealing to a cognitive account of disunity. Baudrillard himself might share this concern, noting that images have a capacity to overwhelm us: their production of meaning exceeds its grounding in the real of generative subjectivity; a hyperreal "redoubling of presence that effaces the opposition between presence and absence" (2001: 191). In effect, according to Baudrillard, subjectivity is redundant before the proliferation of images. Consequently, it is not sufficient to appeal to subjectivity itself (such as our recognition of the need for constructive interpretation) in order to overcome them.

Baudrillard's own response to this problematic is to shift focus to the object/image itself. Instead of resisting the image, we must surrender to it and push its powers of meaning-making to senseless saturation; a "hypertelic" growth in which a system (of images/objects/signifiers) outstrips its objectives (representation/utility/signification) and thereby comes to inhibit it (2001: 192). Baudrillard gives the example of nuclear warfare, in which the destructive capabilities of weaponry far outstrips its purpose, in the end dissuading the very war it is created to facilitate (2001: 193-194).

We can pursue a similar course, invoking the possibilities latent within the image of the body itself to render its connotations of fixity meaningless. If Francis' writings are a 'body', and the authorial figure itself is a body that generates this written body, writers such as Butler (2006, 2011) have shown that bodies themselves (perhaps especially in their in/capacity to generate other bodies) are semiotically fluid. Rather than representing a material boundary for meaning, they are always-already caught up in our processes of meaning-making themselves, and can be performatively re-encoded. Moreover, as we shall see, Francis himself provides us with the basis for a more fluid conception of what it is to be a body: firstly, a continuous theme throughout this thesis is that the Other is encountered as a

transcendent reality that destabilises our anticipations and determinations. In this context, we might think of the body, as the medium for this encounter, as likewise not so much an image of determining unity, but an image of uncertainty, transcendence, and disruption. Secondly, in chapter six, we will see how he conceives of creation as involved in an eschatological journey towards communion, in which the being-in-relation of creatures, of which embodiment is an inextricable part, undergoes a redemptive transformation. Read in these ways, images of the body encompass within themselves the very disruption of the unity that they otherwise signify. Consequently, the idea of an authorial body, or a 'corpus' of writings becomes a meaningless descriptor, connoting unity only as much as it also connotes its impossibility.

1.1.2. A 'READER-CENTERED' HERMENEUTIC

This way of reading Francis is somewhat distinctive, and perhaps controversial. The majority of the literature on Francis does not engage substantively with the question of how to go about reading Francis in the first place, instead tacitly presupposing a variety of hermeneutical approaches. Because these hermeneutics remain mostly unarticulated, it is difficult to analyse them in a particularly detailed or precise way. However, Yaghjian (2015) provides a heuristic typology[41] which enables us to make a *rough* schematisation ofthe different approaches extant in the literature that is sufficient for articulating what is distinctive about our own approach.

It distinguishes between three broad hermeneutical types, defined according to where each reading 'locates' the meaning of the text:[42] "author-centered", "subject-centered", and

[41] Yaghjian's book is a guide for undergraduate students starting out particularly in Biblical theology. To this end, this typology in no way aspires to be a full-blown theory of meaning. Nor does she even attempt to articulate substantive features of each type beyond their basic identifying quality. To this end, we are using it descriptively, as short-hand for distinguishing key features of our approach to others, rather than prescriptively, as the foundation for a method.

[42] Yaghjian formulates this typology specifically in relation to Biblical interpretation, but it carries over to reading the documents of the ordinary Magisterium. To situate my thesis, I have indicated some texts which can be read as examples of each in the footnotes below.

Naturally, the typology is not a rigid one, and various readings of Francis fall within it in mixed and/or ambiguous ways. A particularly clear example of this being Toldy (2017): to begin with, Toldy adopts what we will come to call a '*subject-centered*' approach, focusing on what *Laudato Si'* says and does not say about women. However, she then attempts to "attach women's faces" to the problems identified in the encyclical (2017: 170), finding new meaning in the encyclical through a recontextualised reading – that is, she shifts into what we will come to call a '*reader-centered*' approach. Finally, she then uses her recontextualised reading to critically assess Francis' rejection of anthropocentrism – that is, shifting back to a dialogical mode that is characteristic of '*subject-centered*' hermeneutics. Where ambiguity arises, I have categorised readings based on which hermeneutic predominates. I have also briefly reflected on some of the difficulties involved in making these identifications.

"reader-centered".[43] She gives Hirsch (1967), Gadamer (1997), and Ricoeur (1981) as exemplars of each, respectively.

An 'author-centered' hermeneutic "identifies textual meaning with the author's intended meaning and locates that meaning in the original horizon, or context, of the document" (Yaghjian, 2015: 201). That is, it is premised on the idea that a text can only be properly understood when it is first understood in relation to the historical situation of its authors and original audience. As Yaghjian puts it, "writing in this mode begins as a line of works that takes us back to its original horizon, before we follow it into other contexts". This requires an informed understanding of that situation. It also "empowers" the interpreter themselves to "trust their own construals of meaning and significance", because their interpretations are grounded in concrete historical knowledge. However, this must also be qualified by reference to the fact that this knowledge is only "probability", rather than certitude. To this end, it is useful for both the exegesis of texts, and also building upon this exegesis to interpret the text in a way that is intelligible in a contemporary context (Yaghjian, 2015: 201).[44]

A 'subject-centered' hermeneutic, rather than trying to mediate the text to the reader via the historical situation of the author, instead conceives of the text as mediating the author and reader. It "correlates textual meaning with its subject matter and realizes that meaning through subject centered conversation that brings about a fusion of horizons of the author and the interpreter" (Yaghjian, 2015: 201). Whereas 'author-centered' hermeneutics seek to understand by reconstructing the meaning of the author, 'subject-centered' hermeneutics seek to understand by posing questions to the text, and then writing in response to them. In doing so, 'subject-centered' hermeneutics facilitate the application of texts to new contexts (Yanghjian, 2015: 202). However, this requires "a clearly delineated "original" horizon" to which we put our questions. As such, this kind of reading presupposes an 'author-centered' exegesis (2015: 201).[45]

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[43] *C.f.* Hirsch (1967), Gadamer (1997), and Ricoeur (1981).

[44] For examples of 'author-centered' approaches to Francis, see Berryman (2016), Borghesi (2018), Curran (2013), Faggioli (2016a), Lemna (2014), McGill (2017), Mudge (2018), O'Collins (2016), O'Halloran (2018), Robin Ryan (2015), Rourke (2016a; 2016b), Sadowski (2016), Scannone (2016), Sedmak (2017), Whelan (2015), Worthen (2016), Zhang (2016).

[45] For examples of 'subject-centered' readings of Francis, see Abeyasingha (2016), Abram (2017), Alva (2016), Arasa (2018), Bevans (2015b), Booth (2017), Boyte (2017), Briliute (2016), Butkus and Kolmes (2017), Capaldi (2016), Chipalkatti, Rishi and Lobo (2018), Choi (2017), Considine (2015), das Neves (2017), Deane-Drummond (2016; 2017), Denis (2016), Gregg (2015), Gruber (2017a), Handley (2016), Jamieson (2015), Johnston Largen (2016), Kaboré (2018), Kelly (2016), Kennedy and Santos (2017), Kureethadam (2016), Lasida (2017), Lemna (2014), Lennan (2014), Marx (2016), Montgomery (2015), Morgan (2018), Muscolino (2016), Northcott (2016), Oltvai (2018), Pittapillil (2016), Principe (Kris),

These two hermeneutics are problematised by the de-centered authorship of 'Francis' that we are seeking to read. An 'author-centered' approach is problematic in the context of our project precisely because the authorship 'Francis' defies reduction to a particular historical source. This is not to say that 'reader-centered' hermeneutics are problematic in general: these documents do have an historical origin, and that origin does lie (in some more or less mediated way) in the thought of Pope Francis *qua* historical individual. However, the focus of this kind of reading is ultimately on a different object to ours: as we have argued above, the text that we ultimately are tasked with appropriating as Catholics does not have a straightforward foundation in an historical author figure. In this contextan 'author-centered' approach would perhaps tell us less about 'Francis' the authorial figure, and more about some other phenomenon, and is not the appropriate method here. Following from this, a 'subject-centered' hermeneutic is also problematic because it lacks the clear horizon of authorship to which the reader can pose questions.

This leads us on to the third hermeneutic: the 'reader-centered' hermeneutic. A fundamental difference between this hermeneutical stance and the previous two is its location of text in relation to speech, and thus the person of the author. Whereas Hirsch and Gadamer conceive of writing in terms of a mediation of the meaning-making author as encountered more directly in speech, Ricoeur understands writing as its own "autonomous mode of communication", and "equal" to speech "as a communicative medium". For Ricoeur the function of writing is not to mediate the meaning-making author to the reader (as in speech). Rather, this meaning-making itself becomes a function of the interpretation of the text by a reader, who encounters it in a situation of removal from the person of the writer (Yaghjian, 2015: 203).

Proniewski (2015), Puggioni (2017), Robin (2015), Rowlands (2015), Scherz (2016), Schlag (2017), Silecchia (2015; 2018), Spadaro (2018), Thompson (2016), Toldy (2017), van den Heuvel (2018), Wrobleski (2016), Zhang (2016).

In many cases, 'subject-centered' approaches only are so ambiguously. This is generally for two reasons. Firstly, most of the literature portrays itself as simply looking at 'what Francis says' or 'what [text x] says' about a given issue. In both cases, the literature appears to mediate Francis' intention to us. However, it is unclear whether it does so based on an assumed context that makes the information readily apparent (i.e. an 'author-centered' approach) or whether it is the navigation of the issues themselves (and the mediation between the subjectivities of author and reader around them – i.e. a 'subject-centered' approach) that undergirds the reading of the text.

Secondly, Francis writes out of a tradition which serves as both the context for, and the object of, his theological reflection. Where a reading identifies Francis as deploying certain elements of this prior tradition (as virtually all readings do), it is thus unclear whether this constitutes a locating of meaning in relation to the context provided by this tradition (i.e. an 'author-centered' approach), or an investigation of how Francis writes 'about' the tradition such that it serves to mediate Francis and the reader (i.e. a 'subject-centered' approach).

This hermeneutical approach requires the reader to engage with the text specifically *as writing*; something that is encountered in its own autonomy. Interpretation is a struggle not to uncover a hidden meaning in the text as such, but to appropriate the alien meaning presented by the text such that it becomes one's own. In this context, in writing *about* a text, our task is to invite others to engage in this process themselves (Yaghjian, 2015: 204).[46]

[46] For examples of 'reader-centered' approaches to Francis, see Bevans (2015b; 2016); Byrne (2016); Campos (2017); Carter (2014); Ceballos (2016); Chaput (2017); Choi (2015); Choi (2017); Clarkson (2017); Clifford (2017); Considine (2015); Cooreman-Guittin (2016); Cremers (2016); Cuddeback (2016); Dettloff (2017); Gaudelli (2017); Gilchrist (2017); Goleń (2018); Granados (2017); Gruber (2017b); Hanby (2015); Hrynkow (2016; 2018); Iheanacho (2016); Imanaka (2018); Knoetze (2015); Lemna (2014); López (2016); Lunney (2016); Magesa (2017); Messinger (2017); Michaluk (2017); Moccia (2017); Pavić and Šundalić (2016); Peppard (2016); Porras (2015); Pramuk (2018); Reginald (2017); Sachs (2017); Scherz (2018); Seifert (2016); Thompson (2016); Toldy (2017); Torevell (2018); Turkson (2015); Urick, Hisker and Godwin (2017); and Wahlberg (2017).

It is sometimes unclear whether the literature on Francis is 'subject-' or 'reader-centered'. Because most writers do not explicitly identify a locus of meaning for the text, it can be ambiguous whether the literature locates meaning in the figure of the author, or whether it ultimately represents the author of that literature's own appropriation (as reader) of the text as an autonomous locus of meaning - for example, Campos (2017), who notes in the title that he is giving "an Indian Perspective" on Laudato Si', but which manifests primarily in the selection of the contents of the encyclical, rather than explicit reflexivity.

Similarly, attempts to read Francis' texts according to the tradition, such as Michaluk (2017), Goleń (2017), or Chaput (2017), blur the boundaries between 'reader-centered' and both 'author-centered' or 'subject-centered' approaches: on the one hand, they bring an interpretive framework to bear on the text (that is, a particular reading of the tradition). However, on the other, they understand this framework in terms of the historical context of that text – namely, the historical tradition out of which it nominally speaks.

Michaluk's paper is also interesting in that his 'reader-centered' approach is particularly subtle, to the point that it only becomes plausibly visible if we are attuned to the cultural weight of his methodology. We have to pay attention to instances such as when, in the course of a discussion about approaches to technological development, he claims that "[w]hen analyzing Laudato Si'… it is worth considering that his teaching continues the thoughts of his predecessors, but is more up to date and concrete" (2017: 379). Here, his analysis of these predecessors on this topic, and his comparison with *Laudato Si'*, is too superficial to truly indicate either continuity or discontinuity. A charitable reading of his argument thus prompts us to a different interpretation of this claim. One option for this would be to read the statement as an apologetic move: as we saw in the previous chapter, and as we probably know from experience, apparent discontinuities between Francis' papacy and those of his predecessors carry weight for both 'conservative' and 'progressive' partisans within the Church - 'conservative' critics of Francis often pin their criticism on what they identify as discontinuities between him and his predecessors, and 'progressive' readers use these discontinuities to detract from the positions which Francis has ostensibly abandoned. In adopting this premise, Michaluk pushes a hermeneutic of continuity which undercuts both these readings. In other words, Michaluk actually offers a 'reader-centered' approach, circulating around the appropriation of a particular understanding of Francis' theology. This is plausible inasmuch as there is a clear motive for doing so: presenting this reading constitutes an intervention into a broader cultural conflict within the Church. This is an action of value for an individual invested in that conflict - as Michaluk, like all Catholics, surely is.

Finally, readings which attempt to put Francis' texts 'in dialogue' with other texts (such as Bevans (2016)) appear to be subject centred approaches, particularly given their explicit focus on dialogue. However, behind these readings lies a 'reader-centered' interpretative decision for both dialogue partners. In short, they select both Francis' texts and the interlocutor texts as hermeneutical frameworks through which to engage the other. They thereby mediate both texts specifically *as* in

The similarities between the presuppositions of a 'reader-centered' hermeneutic and the conditions of our own project are fairly clear: our Baudrillardian reading of Francis' authorship leads to a decentred account of its meaning, this emerging from the texts themselves, and the processes of their production, dissemination, reception and interpretation. Moreover, we can identify our project with this process of appropriation – we have to receive these texts in a way that enables us to implement them in the life of the Church. In this vein, in writing about the texts, we also seek to enable others to engage with them in the same manner.

Likewise, as we mentioned previously, what this means for our project is that our reading of Francis cannot be understood to be a simple read reception that aspires to uncover some 'true meaning' lying behind the texts, apart from the process of reading or interpretation itself. By extension, we cannot aspire to passively 'receive' any meaning that exists prior to this reception. At all points, we are always-already involved with the text. The process of interpretation and reception are all determinative of the meaning of the texts themselves, and we must be both aware and unafraid of the active role that we play in this dynamic.

This requires us to adjust our expectations for what this project can entail, and it is in this readjustment that we might find our concerns to lie. One way of framing this is in terms of the Catechism's teaching that the faithful are to "receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms" (*CCC* §87). In this context, we must accept a sense of 'docility' that recognises the active role we play not just in the acknowledgement and implementation of teachings, but in the construction of the meaning of those teachings themselves. As such, we cannot aspire to work from a position that dispenses with this role It is worth noting that the issue at stake here is not, ultimately, about whether we are to be 'docile' or not. Rather, it turns on what it means to be 'docile' in the first place, and encourages us to reflect critically on this. This issue, together with differences around the issue that underpins it – namely how we ought to conceive of 'Francis' as authorial figure – may lie at the root of the main methodological distinctions between this

dialogue through the reading practice that places them in this dialogical relation to one another. In this context, Ceballos (2017) is particularly interesting: this paper weaves a rich tapestry out of a variety of sources, structured by an extended reflection on *Laudato Si'.* On the one hand, this paper could be read as juxtaposing a 'subject-centered' reading of the encyclical alongside 'subject-centered' readings of other texts. However, by deploying it in this structuring role, Ceballos integrates the text into a wider intertextual field that in turn expands the meaning of the encyclical itself. In short, by functionally recontextualising *Laudato Si',* thereby rendering it a meaning-bearing unit in a larger hybrid text, Ceballos produces a 'reader-centered' reading of the encyclical itself in which its intratextual meaning is also enriched.

thesis and other readings and appropriations of Francis, both in terms of choice of hermeneutical type, and perhaps the willingness to synthesise his writings in a self-consciously creative manner.

The uncertainty of this critical reflection around docility itself, alongside the potential for creative activity that it potentially enables, may be the root source of our concern – especially when contrasted with the security and passivity of the uncritical response normally associated with 'docile reception'.[47] However, we must recognise that, insofar as the challenge is to reconceive of docility as such, the question our approach raises is whether the proper reception of texts is not inextricably bound up in a measure of freedom to approach them in a way that facilitates their appropriation in the context of one's project. If a 'reader centered' approach is truly necessary, then, far from such a reading distorting the texts, it is only in light of such a project that the texts themselves attain meaning. Consequently, a more self-consciously creative approach cannot merely be dismissed out of hand.

1.2. A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Another concern might arise around our attempt to read Francis' writings as parts of a systematic whole which exceeds each individual document. It is the contention of this thesis that such a reading brings to light this systematic whole, even if this whole is not immediately apparent. In order to do this, moreover, it will ask questions of these texts which are not explicitly treated within them. As we shall see, a close reading of the texts in dialogue provides answers to these questions. However, this reading is admittedly somewhat 'against the grain' of the texts as they present themselves.

These questions will be with regards to various philosophical issues, and one of the tricky aspects about approaching Pope Francis as a theologian is that he does not produce texts for reading with an eye to these issues. What we have is a galimorphry of media reports, encyclicals, transcribed addresses, and homilies, many of which are only accessible in some edited and translated form. Thus his corpus lacks an explicit systematic form. Moreover, each such source does not attempt to lay out a systematic treatise or unpack an idea: what they constitute are quick, popular explorations of or meditations on ideas, an understanding of which is presupposed and never defined. Rather, they lend themselves to reflection without attending to the fine grain of an idea, and in this vein most readers will quite rightly look to

[47] And perhaps this reflects the key issue around which we are looking to interpret Francis in the first place.

them for nothing more than a spark of inspiration or general orientation in the course of daily life. As such, they provide difficult material for close, systematic reading.

Indeed, Francis himself privileges this kind of 'everyday' focus in theology. One of the key principles of his thought is that "realities are greater than ideas" (*EG* §231): we must attend to the complexities and intransigencies of 'real life' rather than focusing on comparatively neat ideas and theories which, despite lending themselves well to analysis in an academic context, are often reductive or insensitive to the particularities of a situation. As such, a critic might be tempted to say that it is inappropriate or somehow abusive of the sources to attempt to present a philosophically-oriented, systematic approach to Francis' theology. We will also see, in chapter four in particular, that Francis affords a significance to the local and particular (indeed, to local and particular uses of language), and warns against reducing it away to the global or universal – something which might in itself give us pause before establishing a 'universal' system around the 'local' interventions of particular texts.

The first response to this concern is that this thesis ultimately shows that Francis' writings *do* in fact have a systematic, and philosophically sophisticated dimension. On this front, the above criticism merely begs the question. Indeed, in light of the genre distinctions between Francis' teaching documents and the academic kind of writing in this thesis, I would argue that the transformations which take place in the act of translating from one form to another are primarily genre-based. A superficial piece of theological writing makes use of concepts with the same potential for nuanced and complex meaning as academic theology - and indeed we assume there is some continuity between them to the extent that academic theology can speak about the faith in which an encyclical instructs us at all. The difference between the two is not that the meaning of the latter is more complicated than the former, but that the former obscures this complexity in its expression. To this end, reading a more superficial document like an encyclical in an academic way is primarily a matter of changing the genre so as to bring the originally obscured meaning into sharper relief.

In a similar vein, our argument for his affording significance to the local arises out of this systematic perspective. To this end, we might question the rationale behind privileging the local over the particular in our reading of Francis. At the very least, what this reveals is that the very question of whether to emphasise the particularity of texts or the universality of a systemic reading in the first place is contingent upon prior hermeneutical decisions – decisions which themselves need to be justified. This means that we must do more than merely appeal to the supposed 'variety' and 'particularity' of texts, as if the meaning and

significance of this variety were simply evident. Moreover, if we refer to our reading of Francis in order to do this, then this argument itself would presuppose a systematic outlook as its own basis. Likewise, as we shall also see in chapter four, Francis' recognition of the particular is not an indifference towards particulars in general. More specifically, in chapter seven, we will argue that he can sustain first-order commitments in such a way as to recognise universal truth claims. In other words, his recognition of the local and the particular admits the possibility of universality, and there is no reason why this should not apply to our hermeneutic of his documents themselves, rather than reducing their meaning purely to particular instances of language use local to their contexts.

Another consideration might be that, although Francis does not present his theology to us 'already assembled', respecting this by not attempting to assemble anything from it denies us the kinds of resources which come from systematisation and 'academic' kinds of reading. These include a richer and more sophisticated understanding of the meaning and significance of the texts than is enabled by the more superficial expression of the original documents prior to this re-contextualisation and re-reading. Furthermore, this in turn can allow us to appropriate the texts in a broader and more rigorous way: by recognising the wider systematicity of those texts, we can refer between them in order to explain the questions and lacunae which necessarily arise in the context of their more narrow focus; by reading them in relation to a more sophisticated understanding of their objects allows us in turn to derive more sophisticated answers to the questions they seek to help us to solve; and figuring out the conceptual underpinnings of their practical recommendations allows us to approach those recommendations in a more critically informed, reflective (and so perhaps less authoritarian) way, and to apply them more precisely in different contexts , enabling a more sophisticated praxis. To put it succinctly, the texts are *better* when read in this way. In this vein, we might also say that our mode of reading, while perhaps a little counter-intuitive, is also the more *charitable* one.[48] Correspondingly, academic theology itself is also enriched by engaging in these kinds of text, insofar as it comes to be informed by insights expressed in voices otherwise excluded from the academy.[49]

[48] And one might hope that presenting them in this more robust way will go some way to assuaging worries about perceived inadequacies.

[49] As we will see, this attention to difference and the Other is a prominent theme in Francis' theology as we read it. To this end, we might say that academic theology also starts to be conducted in a way more in tune with Francis' teachings themselves; an integration into the life of the Church and a way of embodying teaching negotiated on a basis other than that of the fraught relationship between centralised Magisterial authority and academic freedom (for example, as in the controversy around *Donum Veritatis*).

Moreover, if such a creative approach enables us to articulate Francis' thought more robustly than would otherwise be possible, then this too speaks in its favour at least insofar as the Church has to receive Francis' thought in at least some form. Along these lines, the texts themselves are directed towards the good of the Church. Reading them creatively can help them further pursue this good where a more conventional reading would not, as it can allow them to transcend their original presentation.

The 'reader-centered' hermeneutic necessitated by Francis' de-centred authorship enables this reading. Even if a systematising approach 'goes against the grain' of the texts as they superficially present themselves, it constitutes an important part of the meaning-making process in the context of the appropriation of Francis' theology in this project.

1.3. Abstraction

This also relates to another potential worry with regards to our project: the relative abstraction of our reading from the 'historical context' of its composition. Many analyses of Francis focus on demonstrating the historical pedigree of his theology, for example by explaining its Argentinian roots, and its relationship to particular traditions of interpreting the Second Vatican Council. This kind of approach is helpful insofar as these historical links can help us to navigate the ideas in the text in a broadly systematic way. It also helps assuage concerns around fitting Francis' teachings into the wider Magisterial tradition, at least conceived in a certain way. Finally, as mentioned earlier, we will also see that Francis affords a significance to the local and historical, and this might also lead us to attend to the historical particularities of his authorship. However, this thesis does not take this approach, and this may be of concern to more historically-minded readers.[50] To assuage this worry, I offer the following arguments:

Firstly, the texts we are reading intrinsically resist identification with the object of this kind of genealogical study. The de-centred authorship that is the 'Francis' with which we are concerned cannot be identified with the figure of 'Francis' the individual. This means that any reading which interprets a text in terms of that individual is always-already engaging with a fundamentally *different* text to the one with which we are engaging – even if they are nominally the same (e.g. they are both called "*Amoris Laetitia*").

[50] Although we will touch on certain historical figures and moments in order to guide our reading (particularly the Argentine *Theology of the People* in chapter four, Aquinas in chapter six, and general pre-modern trends in Eucharistic theology in chapter seven), this is not done with the specific intention of situating Francis within the tradition.

Secondly, the texts themselves are disseminated in order that they are appropriated in ways other than contextualisation. When we read a papal encyclical, we do not immediately run to the history books to figure out where the ideas within come from. This is because, although they may have been written in response to particular contexts (as John Paul II told us above), these texts nevertheless purport to speak in general or even universal ways. Similarly to the above, this general outlook also requires us to read in more explicitly abstract terms.

Following on from this, as we noted previously, part of the process of reading these documents is a creative appropriation. They must speak to situations beyond the limited contexts of their compositions, and what enables this is their creative appropriation by the wider reading community (of which we are part). On this front, a historical genealogy of Francis' thought only goes so far: it tells us where it comes from, and helps us to relate otherwise disparate elements around issues specific to the context of that origin. However, genealogy does not necessarily help us look at it in our expanded context, particularly where that context is quite different to the 'original' one. We are interested in abstract issues about hermeneutics of alterity, approached in terms borrowed from an American cultural critic from 2002. This demands a different reading – one that is oriented towards teasing out the concepts and relationships relevant in this context, rather than attempting to 'read back' into it Argentine theology from the 1960s, or the outlook of CELAM in the 1980s. In this vein, our focus also necessitates a level of abstraction. General philosophical issues apply, and can be important, even where they are not anticipated by specific texts. Because they are to an extent detached from the immediate context of the texts themselves, these issues can *only* be treated with a degree of abstraction.

Focusing on this reflection and accounting for its historical roots are two different projects, and while the latter would certainly be valuable, there is too much to the former to fully do justice to it while also attempting to do the latter. To the extent that I, as a PhD student, can be said to have any 'background' at all, my background is primarily philosophical. As such, I have elected in this study to focus on the philosophical issues which arise in the context of Francis' writings, and allow myself to be guided in my interpretation by how they navigate these issues (specifically in a systematic way), rather than attempt to trace the particular historical genesis of each move 'he' makes.[51]

[51] Note that by not treating more contextual issues, I am not arguing that more contextual readings can be ignored. My project is perhaps best read alongside these other kinds of projects, as

Finally, with regards to the issue of situating Francis in the tradition: the assumption that we need to do this implies that Francis' teachings might *not* be in continuity with the tradition (whatever we take this to mean). However, these texts, as papal texts, are at least nominally authoritative components of the tradition. In this vein, the impetus towards this kind of reading often lies in the sense that Francis' teachings need to be defended as properly 'traditional' in this way. However, this is not an issue with which this thesis is concerned - our project is not this kind of apologetic project. Furthermore, at least to the extent that this kind of argument amounts to a kind of 'proof texting' (which we have already argued embodies a paranoid hermeneutic), the upshot of this thesis is that Francis' theology enables us to avoid this way of reading - thereby undercutting the force of these claims, at least when presented without engagement with Francis' theology on its own terms.

This does not entirely settle the issue, however. One further argument for an historicising approach is that a-historical hermeneutics *themselves* fail on a theological level. For example, Granados (2017) argues against readings of *Amoris Laetitia* that do not (and thus proposing a reading that does) interpret its teachings on divorce in a way consonant with a particular strand of sacramental theology, identified specifically with Irenaeus. On the one hand, he thereby identifies the meaning of *Amoris Laetitia* with a particular understanding of the historical tradition from which Francis putatively writes. On the other, he presents this reading explicitly *as* a reading from 'the Tradition' (which is to say, a particular, if perhaps rightfully privileged, interpretive standpoint), and argues that alternatives are illegitimate precisely because they do not read it from this standpoint. We might thus understand Granados as presenting a 'reader-centered' approach that entails an 'author-centered' hermeneutics, albeit a restricted one.

Granados is clearly influenced in this by his ecclesiology, which also serves as the content of the contextualising information that guides the 'author-centered' reading. Indeed, he notes that the reading of *Amoris Laetitia* against which he argues "undermines… the Petrine ministry itself, depriving it of the sacramental basis on which it was founded" (2017: 665-666). This demonstrates that the hermeneutical question is not a theologically neutral one – deciding our hermeneutics involves taking stances more or less directly on wider theological topics, such as ecclesiology. By extension, there is a danger in making hermeneutical

complementary to them. Moreover, synthesising the two approaches would undoubtedly be fruitful. I just do not have the space or expertise for it here.

decisions without reflecting on the more specific theological issues on which those decisions might impinge.

This is a risk that we are just going to have to run. Firstly, it would be a mistake to assume from this that a given theology ought to or (even could) function as some kind of 'first philosophy'. It is trivial to say that theological truth claims always involve implicit commitments beyond those strictly 'internal to theology'. This includes hermeneutical commitments: in the case of Granados, his reading of the Tradition is premised upon a particular selection and reading of historical sources. In a complementary way, the choice for these readings similarly involves other theological commitments.

These commitments, however, are not a given. As will become apparent in this thesis, Francis' texts themselves actually articulate the possibility of receiving from the Other, which renders these kinds of disciplinary boundaries more porous than is suggested by Granados' hermeneutic. Likewise, the tradition itself problematises these kinds of disciplinary boundaries, at least under certain readings. Pound notes that Thomas Aquinas himself, whose theology is closer to being identified with *the* Tradition than any other, looked beyond the boundaries of recognised 'theological' thought to Aristotle. Consequently, the methodological model with which he (and by extension, the Tradition as embodied in him) presents us is one that endorses "repeating his gesture" and finding a contemporary voice for rearticulating theology. These possibilities reveal that Granados' hermeneutic is founded upon a decision to prioritise certain figures in his reading of Francis, and therefore also the possibility of reading Francis outside of the parameters set by his decision.

The issue of arguing for one decision on this matter over another is a complex one, which lies beyond the scope of our project here.[52] However, the above arguments ought to indicate that our approach is at least reasonable; I leave its ultimate appraisal to the reader.

1.4. REDUCTION

Before we continue, we should make sure to clear up a potential misunderstanding around our project which relates to the above issues. A 'reader-centered' hermeneutic involves meaning making in the process of reading itself. One way in which this can be accomplished is through a fourth type of hermeneutic, which Yaghjian calls a "writer-centered hermeneutic". This kind of hermeneutic is different from the others insofar as, rather than

[52] This being to outline how Francis can be read as presenting a reparative alternative to Catholic paranoia, without decisively ruling for or against this alternative.

constituting a distinctive stance towards texts as such, it serves as a tool for approaching specific texts within a 'reader-centered' reading.

'Writer-centered' hermeneutics employ an "interpretive method chosen by the writer for the purpose of explicating a… text in a particular way toward a particular end" (2015: 204-5). Moreover, 'writer-centered' approaches are "[a]uthorized by the semantic autonomy" presupposed in texts by a 'reader-centered' hermeneutic. Yaghjian notes that this hermeneutic "privileges the writer-interpreter's claims on the text rather than the text's claims on the writer-interpreter". That is, in exercising this authority, the interpreter sets "an interpretive agenda (e.g., a feminist hermeneutic; a social science hermeneutic)", which to an extent determines what one finds *in* the text (2015: 204). This, however, risks a certain reductiveness – and perhaps even an inappropriate or distorting mastery of the text.

Our project involves such a hermeneutic: we are employing Sedgwick's typology of paranoid and reparative hermeneutical stances in order to explicate Francis' texts in such a way that a certain treatment of issues of knowledge and alterity on his part become apparent. Moreover, Catholic theology is no stranger to fraught questions of mastery around hermeneutics: for example, when John Paul II warns against reducing ecclesial communion purely to a "sociological or a psychological reality", he is warning against adopting a kind of 'writer-centered' hermeneutic, where that hermeneutic is one of purely secular human sciences (*Christefideles Laici* §19). In this context, we might worry that our reading of Francis (and his critics) through Sedgwick constitutes a kind of psychoanalytic reduction of theology to a mere product of affect, thereby eliminating its cognitive basis.

As such, it is important to understand that Sedwick's typology serves to describe certain features of theological stances – namely their approach to the apparent uncertainty of alterity and indeterminacy. We are not claiming that these theologies are entirely motivated or constituted by an affective reaction, as if the cognitive aspects are a mere side-effect. Similarly, we are not seeking to dismiss certain theologies on the basis of their relation to a paranoid hermeneutical stance.

For example, although our treatment of it was brief, we noted in our reading of *Veritatis Splendor* that John Paul II roots his understanding of conscience and obedience in an exegesis of scripture, and also philosophical ideas of the natural law and its relation to divine law. These constitute a cognitive basis for the paranoid dimensions of the text, and will themselves have cognitive reasons for being maintained. Similarly, by providing a systematic

account of his teachings, our project will identify the cognitive reasons Francis has for his more reparative stance.

One helpful way of framing our project might be as follows: Milbank traces the origins of social theory, including psychoanalysis, in the distinctly theological debates of early modernity. He argues from this that 'the social' itself, as the object constructed by and determining the methodologies of social theory, is itself a "quasi-theological category" (2006: xii). Likewise, then, theology itself is a social theory, able to speak of this category. Pound notes that it "is not difficult to extend Milbank's project to psychoanalysis" (2007: 4), and seeks to "encourage theology to think of itself as already psychology, and liturgy *as* psychoanalysis" (2007: 5). This thesis responds to Pound's encouragement: far from psychoanalysing theologies, we are instead showing how Francis' theology can work therapeutically, helping us to achieve a reparative stance in light of the difficulties that come with being a Catholic theologian.

2. SELECTING TEXTS

This thesis aims to specifically address the writings within the ambiguous authorship of 'Pope Francis'. In order to do so, it limits itself to his major texts published up until 2018.[53] These include the encyclical letters *Lumen Fidei* (2013b) and *Laudato Si'* (2015a)*;* the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013a), *Amoris Laetitia* (2016a) and *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018)*;* the Papal Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (2015d); and the apostolic letters *Misericordia et Misera* (2016b) and *Magnum Principium* (2017).

2.1. WHY THESE TEXTS?

The first reason for this is practical: in the course of his teaching, Francis has produced (and continues to produce) an overwhelmingly vast number of texts in the form of speeches, homilies, and interviews. It would be impossible to integrate all of these into our analysis, so we have to limit ourselves to a subset.

Moreover, this subset ought to be as informative of Francis' theology as possible. In this vein, the second reason is that the documents I have selected reflect on their topics in a distinctively extended way. As such, they are informative for the purposes of my project in a way that his other texts `are not.

[53] Francis continuously produced documents over the course of the time in which this thesis was written. This cut-off is a purely pragmatic one, enabling me to finish rather than deferring to work in more texts.

Thirdly, these texts are the most widely read, and are the texts that will be referenced by future teaching documents. This gives them a *de facto* qualitatively different kind of historical significance, or perhaps even authority, to the other texts: these are the texts to which the Church *really* has to, and will continue to have to, respond. Focusing on these texts means focusing on the Francis that will be received by the Church in a determinate form in the long term. This is not to say that his other texts are ephemeral, but in terms of our project there is a clear difference in significance here.

A final reason why these texts in particular are suited to our project is that they intrinsically lend themselves to 'reader-centered' hermeneutical approaches. The texts take their place within a tradition of epideictic panegyric writing, recovered from Patristic authors by the Second Vatican Council (O'Malley, 2008: 74). Key to this genre is a project of "persuasion" and "reconciliation": they "establish an identity between themselves and their audience" in terms of shared ideals, to which the reader is exhorted (2008: 77). In service of this, the genre also rejects the top-down, legalistic stipulation associated with pre-Conciliar magisterial texts. Instead, it focuses on elaborating these shared values, and inspiring the reader to realise them (2008: 76).[54] We see a similar genre at work throughout these texts, which consistently work to exhort and inspire.

Texts written in this genre presuppose an active role on the part of the reader in interpreting them, laying out responsibilities "not as a code of conduct to be enforced, but as an ideal to be striven for, with the understanding that they are to be adapted to changing times and circumstances" (O'Malley 2008: 76). That is, they are oriented towards appropriation by the reader. Because of this, they invite 'reader-centered' hermeneutical approaches.

Secondly, epeidictic as found in Francis' texts identifies the figure of the speaker with expertise in a way that decenters the historical authorial figure. In traditional Christian usage, epidictic invokes the authority of the speaker as part of an appeal to recognise the speaker as representing and upholding the shared values promulgated in the text (Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca, 1969: 52). Lynch notes that Francis' use of epideictic in *Laudato Si'* assumes an authority grounded not in personal qualifications (e.g. as a scientist), but in the "speech of love" that embodies the religious dimension of the text itself (2017: 474). This has the effect of decentering Francis the historical individual, locating this authoritative voice in the

[54] Which is not to say that elements of the older genre ceased to be employed, or to carry cultural weight. Jamieson notes how Paul VI in *Humane vitae* employs the "static, absolutist vocabulary" and tendency to "assert rather than argue" characteristic of the traditional encyclical genre in order to indicate the authority of the prohibition of birth control (1973: 165-6).

text itself. In doing so, the reader who interprets this authoritative text comes to occupy this central position instead.

Finally, we should note that, in limiting itself thus, this thesis excludes from primary focus the texts written by Francis as Bishop of Buenos Aires. There are two principle reasons for this: firstly, I am concerned with Francis in his capacity as Pope, with the authority that comes with this position, rather than his capacities prior to this. Our motivating problematic arises precisely because he is Pope. Conversely, his teachings as a regional Bishop do not present the same problems, because they do not have to be received in the same way. In a similar vein, to the extent that Papal authority extends over the universal Church whereas the bishops are concerned with the local church, there is a potential issue of compatibility in taking a bishop's pronouncements and applying them in a context the scope of which exceeds that in which they were originally formulated. Finally, a number of these texts have been written in a personal capacity (that is, distanced from the authorship about which we are concerned), and thus are ruled out on this count.

Related to the issue of selecting texts is the question of translation. Francis' texts have been translated into multiple languages, and each translation inescapably renders the meaning of the various documents in a subtly different way from the others. In selecting particular translations to work from, I inevitably exclude certain other interpretations made possible by alternative translations. However, for the reasons outlined above, my interpretation does not pretend to be in any sense a total or final interpretation. As such, I have elected to focus exclusively on the English translation, for two reasons.

Firstly, it is impossible to read and compare every translation, requiring us to attend to a smaller subset. Secondly, the purpose of the various translations is to facilitate the documents being read in native languages. The purpose of this is to enable the documents to be appropriated within the various local contexts of the Church, and this process of appropriation is generally not treated as one that necessarily involves translation from other versions unless an explicit problem is identified in one's native language.[55] Consequently, the documents are published with the assumption that, except in rare cases, they will be interpreted specifically as rendered by translation into the native language of the reader. English is my native language, and so it makes sense to read the documents in English.

[55] We will treat one potential such problem with the translation of *LF* in chapter three.

This is further supported by two factors. Firstly, the affirmation of vernacular translations both in the way that recent synods have been conducted in the vernacular rather than Latin. Secondly, the significance afforded to the local by Francis' own teaching documents – particularly *Magnum principium* (2017). Similarly, appeals to Francis' native Italian or Spanish as the 'original' language locate meaning in Francis the historical person in a way that is problematised by the very nature of the documents themselves, as argued above.

2.2. AUTHORITY

These documents are not equal in authority. Nor are all the various statements within them equal to one another. Nor are they equal in authority relative to the documents of the prior tradition, or all the statements in one the same in comparison to all the statements in another. These questions of relative authority take on particular weight in an apologetic or legal context: insofar as it is a principle whereby conflict can be resolved, learning to balance these disparate levels of authority is a necessary part of navigating the literary component of the doctrine of the Church. This thesis does not address these issues for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it does not undertake an apologetic project of the above sort, limiting the relevance of these issues. Distinctions in authority pertain to the *acceptance* of a given teaching, not the *content* of the teaching itself. As such, they are somewhat extrinsic to my interpretive project, which focuses on the latter issue.

Secondly, the nature of 'authority' itself in this context is ambiguous. Richard McCormick understands the authority of the ordinary magisterium as being a matter of its enjoying a "presumption of truth", which elicits "a type of respect that most often translates factually into assent or acceptance" (1994: 72). However, as he also notes, presumptions are "not carved in granite", and "can be and have been undermined by further consideration, changed facts, the presence of human folly and other factors". Similarly, this presumption is contingent upon the proper operation of the magisterium. McCormick writes: "When they short-circuit these processes… the presumption is correspondingly weakened" (1994: 73). The point here is that there are conditions to our assent to the statements of the ordinary magisterium. Hence, although a text may putatively command greater authority than another, if that inferior text brings into question the conditions for that authority then we can no longer merely invoke the difference of authority in order to resolve the conflict (at least without begging the question).

3. AN OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

We construct our reading of Francis over the next four chapters. Chapter three looks to the account of 'faith-knowledge' in *Lumen Fidei*. Central to this is the concept of 'encounter' with God, which establishes conditions for faith-knowledge that preclude claims to *totality, determination,* and *absoluteness* in that knowledge. The chapter illustrates this in the context of a response to the fifth *dubium,* which we saw in chapter one. It concludes with a discussion of Francis' ethics of 'unselfing' obedience in knowledge, and how this contrasts with the ethics of knowing in *VS.*

Chapter four addresses the ecclesiological dimension of the encyclical, reading it in dialogue with *Evangelii Gaudium.* It argues that the historical embeddedness of faith-knowledge enables an *indeterminate* unity of form within the life of the Church, conceived as the community that shares in faith-knowledge. This enables a 'plurivocal' model of ecclesial unity that serves as the basis for a reparative stance towards difference in *credere in Deum.* Chapter five then reads this ecclesiology through the epistemology of chapter three in order to produce a model of 'metaxological' ecclesial unity. This serves as the basis for a critique of more 'paranoid' ecclesiologies, focusing specifically on that implicit in *Veritatis Splendor.*

Chapter six looks to *Laudato Si'* as the basis for a broadly Thomist analogical metaphysics that also incorporates the themes of encounter from chapter three. It argues that this metaphysics gives rise to an ontology of *relation* that extends the conditions of faith-knowledge established in chapter three to knowledge of creation in general. This enables plurivocity not just in *credere in Deum,* but in *credere Deum.* In doing so, it also responds to two concerns: firstly, with regards to the potential totalitarian associations of the metaxological model of unity in chapter five. It argues that Francis' ontology of *relation* presents an important development from the neoplatonic hierarchies of being that are normally associated with appeals to metaxis. Unlike these hierarchical ontologies, Francis' ontology of *relation* actively resists totalitarian readings of metaxological unity. Secondly, it addresses concerns around Francis' apparent social Trinitarianism, arguing that he in fact presents a Trinitarian apophaticism.

Chapter seven seeks to alleviate fears around danger and disagreement which might otherwise prevent our adopting a reparative stance towards the *indeterminacy* presented in this thesis. It does so by arguing that Francis' ontology of *relation* enables us to read difference in *credere Deum* as more easily accepted difference in *credere in Deum.* It then argues that Laudato Si' presents us with an eschatological vision which, when read in

dialogue with *Evangelii Gaudium,* gives rise to a comic narrative of conflict that enables us to face these differences in a hopeful, rather than fearful, way. It concludes with a short reflection on theological style in the context of this hope.

This thesis then concludes with a brief reflection on themes of uncertainty, ambivalence, and transformative potential. It begins by summarising and consolidating the argument of the previous chapters, as well as discussing its limitations. It then positions Francis' theology in relation to what Komonchak (1994) calls the "Augustinian" and "Thomist" sensibilities, arguing that he deploys a model of "Franciscan knowledge" (Stump, 2010) in order to mediate these poles. Finally, it moves from this to discuss Francis' redemption of negativity in the name of an *indeterminate* hope.

III. KNOWLEDGE AND *TOTALITY* IN *LUMEN FIDEI*

Francis' first encyclical,[56] *Lumen Fidei,*[57] investigates the nature of faith as knowledge – or, as the encyclical puts it, "faith-knowledge" (§28)[58] The next two chapters of this thesis reads

[56] Readers such as Stollenwerk see *Lumen Fidei* as having been "written mostly by pope Benedict XVI", and interpret it in light of Benedict's wider writings (2018: 55). While it is not their focus, this chapter and the next show that *LF* can also be read as fundamentally integrated into Francis' Magisterium.

[57] Hereafter, *LF*

[58] Readers particularly of a Thomist bent may be given pause here, for two reasons. Firstly, the English rendering of *cognitio* as "faith-knowledge" is theologically problematic in itself because it effaces the distinction between *scientia* and *cognitio,* two concepts which might fall under "knowledge", but for Aquinas are distinct in crucial ways. This distinction, moreover, is present in the vocabulary of the Latin version, which renders this as "cognitio fidei". Secondly, in conflating the two as "knowledge", it effaces a significant aspect of this distinction – namely that, for Aquinas at least, faith is a form of *cognitio,* but not *scientia*. Consequently, if we take "knowledge" without distinguishing it from *scientia*, we end up with an oxymoron.

This is not necessarily an issue, at least for one understanding of the nature of this distinction, as given by Thomas Aquinas, as interpreted by MacDonald (1993). MacDonald argues that, at least as rendered in Aquinas, neither *cognitio* nor *scientia* perfectly correspond to knowledge: *cognitio* is much broader, referring to the "cognition" of an object through assimilation to the mind, and therefore capable of being false (1993: 162). In contrast, *scientia* is a reflective form of knowledge, referring to "*complete and certain* cognition" of the truth of a proposition, specifically by way of a demonstrative syllogism (1993: 164). Moreover, Aquinas claims that *scientia* can only be held on the basis of premises whose justification in being held is non-inferential. Instead, these truths are justified in light of their being "necessarily true propositions whose falsity is inconceivable to us" (MacDonald, 1993: 173). MacDonald notes that the only kinds of truths which enjoy this status could be "*a priori* truths of axiomatic systems" (2003: 174), and in this regard *scientia* is significantly narrower than "knowledge" as used in English. To this end, any translation of either to "knowledge" is imperfect. Consequently, this imperfection may just be inescapable when writing in English (as I do) - although perhaps "cognition" is a better word for *cognitio,* as MacDonald himself translates it.

However, there are two reasons why this is less problematic than we might think. Firstly, it is not entirely true that faith cannot be designated as "*scientia"*: MacDonald reads Aquinas to argue that he recognises the narrowness of *scientia* and expands it analogously by admitting "secondary *scientia*" of which true *scientia* is the paradigm, but which only holds "degrees culminating in completeness and certainty" (2003: 174). One example of secondary *scientia* is that which pertains to the truths about God, where we base our propositions in observations of God's logically and metaphysically contingent effects in creatures, rather than the logically and metaphysically necessary properties of God in Godself 1993: 176). To this end, the translation may not be as problematic as we might originally think with regards to *scientia* and faith.

Secondly, although the Latin employs these terms, there is no reason to think that this vocabulary is the most faithful rendering of the concepts themselves employed in *LF.* Indeed, we have good reason to think that a catch-all "knowledge" may be a more helpful rendering. Our reading of *LF* identifies elements within it drawn from the phenomenology of Martin Buber. For Buber, as we shall see, "knowledge" refers to the intentional 'grasp' by the mind of its object – something which corresponds more to Aquinas' more general concept of *cognitio* rather than propositional *scientia*. Insofar as, for Buber, thematicity (including propositional attitudes) emerges reflexively from the unthematic, it perhaps makes sense to render the distinction between the two in terms of an internal distinction within an overarching category – something which is achieved by conceiving of them both under the aegis of "knowledge". In this context, even the phrase "faith-knowledge" is less problematic, insofar as "knowledge" admits distinctions between both thematicity and unthematicity, and the kinds of justifications which obtain for each.

the encyclical in dialogue with Francis' later papal texts in order to construct an epistemology from *LF*, and then translate it into an ecclesiology that provides the basis for a reparative way of being Church as outlined in those wider texts.[59]

As a way of 'getting into' this reading, we will begin by looking to the issue raised with regards to *Amoris Laetitia* by the fifth *dubium,* which we saw in our introductory chapter. Through our analysis of this issue, we will identify three concepts. The first two of these concepts, *fullness* and *limitation*, brings us into contact with *Evangelii Gaudium.*[60] These concepts introduce an eschatological theme, which is more fully worked out in *EG,* and which touches on issues of totality and the anticipatory or 'strong-theoretical' dimensions of paranoid hermeneutics. This eschatological theme will serve as the basis for our treatment of our third concept, *divine requirement*, which we will argue serves as an example of a particular kind of logical structure implicit in Francis' theology. These thematic elements will serve as the basis for our reading of the epistemology given in *LF,* which emerges as necessitating a certain logical structure to theological knowledge. We will then apply this logic to Francis' discussion of mercy in his Papal Bull, *Misericordiae Vultus,*[61] and the Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*[62] as a 'worked example'. In doing so, we will also provide a response to the *dubium* itself.

1. Fullness, limitation, and the 'logic' of *Lumen Fidei*

To begin with, let us recall the fifth *dubium,* seen in chapter one. This problematises the following passage in *AL:*

On a similar note, for Buber, "knowledge" is founded upon an immediate experience of an Other. Buber affords this immediate, inceptual encounter an irreducibility that Aquinas would not. In other words, Buber rejects the exclusive epistemic privilege Aquinas affords to true *scientia* on the basis of its foundation in necessary propositional truths. To this end, it is questionable whether Aquinas' concept of *scientia* is even applicable here – which in turn throws into question the very distinction that is elided by the English "knowledge".

On this point, where the Latin translation of *LF* does use "scientia", it is always in relation to metaphors of sight or thematic knowledge (in particular, the 'sciences') (§14, 25, 34, 36, 37, 38). In contrast, "cognitio" is used in the context of both illumination metaphors/sight (e.g. §28) as well as in the context of other kinds of knowing – including the interpersonal encounter with God which we will associate with Buber's pre-thematic encounter with the Other ("Ille subiectus est qui se praebet cognoscendum ac manifestandum, videlicet e persona ad personam"; "He is a subject who makes himself known and perceived in an interpersonal relationship" (§36)). In this context, as for Buber's intentional knowledge, the "cognitio fidei" outlined in *LF* pertains to both thematic and unthematic knowledge.

[59] Our reading will deploy a 'reader-centered' hermeneutic, as discussed in chapter two.

[60] Hereafter, *EG*

[61] Hereafter, *MV*

[62] Hereafter, *MM*

> **"...conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one's limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal."**
>
> (*AL* §303)

The key concepts here are as follows: the "concrete complexity of one's limits", in light of which conscience discerns right action; the notion of an "objective ideal" which an action can succeed or fail to meet; that of "God himself" as "asking", or divine requirement. The idea of "moral security" as a quality of the discernment of conscience is also significant, but more specifically in terms of Francis' approach to ethics, which we shall look at in more detail later.

The term 'limits' is resonant of a passage in *EG.* In this text, Francis identifies four principles corresponding to "constant tensions present in every social reality". He asserts that these derive from "the pillars of the Church's social doctrine, which serve as 'primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena'", and that observing them will guide society down "a genuine path to peace within each nation and the entire world" (*EG* §221).[63]

The first of these is "*Time is greater than space".* Francis identifies this principle as negotiating a tension between "fullness" and (here being the resonance) "limitation". 'Fullness' amounts to the complete "possession" of some object, or the attainment of a goal or end. 'Limitation' describes our inability to attain fullness. We exist between these two poles: we occupy a position of limitation in the current 'moment', but we are always living 'towards' fullness, which discloses itself in the negative figure of the "horizon" of this limitation. 'Time' is the dynamic relationship between these two poles, as the horizon of limitation opens itself into fullness. Francis writes: "People live poised between each

[63] Flipper notes that Francis' four principles do not correspond entirely to the four core principles of CST – "the dignity of the human person", "the common good", "subsidiarity", and "solidarity" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* §160; in Flipper, 2018: 202). These seek to mediate the relationship between individuals and specific institutions, whereas Francis' principles "concern the way in which we, as individuals and communities, engage processes" (2018: 202, footnote 3). Taking an 'author-centered' approach, Borghesi argues that they actually derive from Romano Guardini, who characterised life as occurring within the tension between a set of polar opposites. However, he notes that the second of these principles, "realities are greater than ideas" (*EG* §231) serves more as a realist qualification of Guardini's polar philosophy rather than coming directly from them (2018: 116-117).

individual moment, and the greater, brighter horizon of the Utopian future as the final cause which draws us to itself" (*EG* §222).

In this context, we can adopt one of two attitudes: one which wisely prioritises time, and one which prioritises space. The distinction between these two attitudes tracks a corresponding dialect between "spaces" and "processes": prioritising space "means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion", attempting to achieve totality instead of allowing processes to occur. In contrast, prioritising time means "*initiating processes rather than possessing spaces".* That is, it means accepting the tension between the limitation of the present, and totality, and orienting one's life to working within this tension, rather than attempting to grant presence to totality (*EG* §223).

The idea of evaluating action in light of 'one's limits' in *AL* can be read in light of this principle: we can associate 'the concrete complexity of one's limits' with the context of limitation in which we live. This is supported by Francis' characterisation of fullness as "the final cause which draws us to itself". It is in fullness that the Good subsists. As such, we might say, "the objective ideal" corresponds to the action in which fullness is realised, as the other pole in the schema.

This distinction has to be understood in the context of our third key concept, divine requirement. What does it mean to distinguish between an 'objective ideal', corresponding to fullness, on the one hand; and some other class of actions which do not conform to this, but are nevertheless required by God in the context of limitation on the other?

We saw previously that the objection to the passage raised by the *dubium* references *Veritatis Splendor* (§55) in order to frame this distinction in the context of the universality of the norms of divine law. In this context, it would seem that the distinction situates universal norms on the side of fullness, while implying that these norms do not obtain in certain situations of limitation. What we seem to have here is the intimation of a conceptual space that stands in excess of the scope (that is, the *determinations*) of the particular set of universal principles that constitute the moral law.

It is this dialectic more generally - between particular sets of universal *determining* principles on the one hand, and the excess of situations over these principles on the other - that lies at the core of the epistemology laid out in *LF.* In chapter one, we saw how *VS* constructs the basis for a paranoid hermeneutics by *totalising* the precepts of the moral law as interpreted

in the historical teachings of the magisterium. This chapter ultimately argues that, in contrast to *VS, LF* outlines an approach to knowledge which rejects such *totalisation.*

We also noted in our first chapter, as identified by Porter (1995), that one of the ways in which *VS* does this is through confusing universality and generality. By reference to our worked example of Pope Francis' theology of mercy in *MV,* we will show how the epistemology laid out in *LF* defies this confusion, facilitating a commitment to universal moral precepts alongside a restricted sense of their scope.

2. FAITH-KNOWLEDGE

The epistemology of *LF* emerges out of a phenomenological analysis of faith-knowledge, which Francis describes in terms of three metaphors: *hearing, sight,* and *touch*. Each of these metaphors expresses some aspect of faith-knowledge in terms of a relation to totality.

2.1. HEARING

Francis' first metaphor is that of *hearing*. This metaphor is used to express two limiting conditions of our capacity for *total* knowledge.

The first chapter of the encyclical presents a discussion of biblical models of faith, starting with Abraham. Francis notes that, for Abraham, faith is a matter of "hearing" – quite literally. He notes that this establishes faith as something personal: it is a response to "a word which engages us personally, to a "Thou" which calls us by name". In it, God reveals Himself as the "God of a person... capable of interacting with man and establishing a covenant with him" (*LF* §8). Firstly, then, faith is a matter of being engaged in an interpersonal relationship with God, and it is this interpersonal dimension that is identified with the metaphor of *hearing*.

In this vein, Francis writes, faith knowledge is presented in the Bible as a form of hearing because it is "linked to the covenant with a faithful God who enters into a relationship of love with man and speaks his word to him" (*LF* §29). The 'hearing' aspect of faith imparts two qualities to it as knowledge. Firstly, it is "personal knowledge", of a person, whom we, as people, know as such. We know God as a person in and through His revelation. Indeed, for Francis, it is this interpersonal dimension which gives faith-knowledge its force: it is because of this knowledge of who God is as a person that we respond accordingly. Francis

writes that faith "recognises the voice of the one speaking, opens up to that person in freedom and follows him or her in obedience" (*LF* §29).[64]

Francis, in invoking the image of "a "Thou" which calls us by name", seems to be alluding here to Martin Buber (and indeed, as we shall see, he references Buber explicitly later on).[65] For Buber, God can only be addressed on this interpersonal basis – indeed, as the paradigmatic interpersonal relation, "the eternal *Thou*" (Buber, 2013: 53). As we shall see, Buber's thought plays a significant influence on the development of this theme in *LF.*[66]

Secondly, this knowledge is "bound to the passage of time, for words take time to be pronounced, and it is knowledge assimilated only along a journey of discipleship" (*LF* §29). The acquisition of faith-knowledge is not an instantaneous process, nor does it take place in some eternal realm. Rather, faith-knowledge is a matter of continuous communication with God, responding to a revelation that continues to unfold throughout history.

This is exemplified by the model of faith presented in the story of Israel. He writes: "Israel trusts in God, who promises to set his people free from their misery". In this context, the journey of faith takes on a literal meaning: "Faith becomes a summons to a lengthy journey leading to worship of the Lord on Sinai and in the inheritance of the promised land". The witness of Israel is to God's guidance along this journey in terms of His concrete deeds in

[64] It is worth noting here that *Lumen Fidei* does not frame this knowledge specifically in terms of moral knowledge. Thus, while we have been prompted to this reading by its specific realisation in terms of morality, the logic presented in *Lumen Fidei* is presented in generic terms. That is, the model of theology presented by Francis is not purely a model of moral theology, but is rather a logic of faith knowledge in general.

[65] Buber invokes the concept of "*I-Thou*", which he describes as a "primary word", with a "combined" nature. The function of this word is to "intimate relations". He describes it as being "spoken from being", and, in doing so, "bring[ing] about existence". That is, the pair "I-Thou" constitutes a transcendental condition of subjectivity. Its companion 'primary word' is "I-It" (2013: 3). Each primary word brings about a certain mode of subjectivity: Buber distinguishes between "experience" and "relation": *experience* is a mode of subjectivity brought about by I-It. In experience, subjectivity is thematic – Buber describes it as the "sphere of transitive verbs", constituted in activity directed at an object ("some *thing* for their object"). Buber contrasts this with *relation,* in which the Thou is encountered, but unthematically ("When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing* for his object... But he takes his stand in relation") (2013: 4). We will return to this later.

[66] The historically-minded reader should note that Francis has a notable ongoing relationship with Judaism and its thinkers, particularly throughout his career as archbishop (*c.f.* Skorka (2018)), and in his friendship with the Argentine Rabbi, Abraham Skorka (*c.f.* Bergoglio and Skorka (2013)). He was also presented with an inscribed copy of Buber's *I and Thou* at the Vatican celebration of *Nostra Aetate* in 2015 (Kessler, 2018: 87). However, these details are extraneous to our 'reader-centered' hermeneutic. More directly relevant, Young-Somers recognises a theme of what might be described as a "personalism", which he associates with Buber, in Francis' wider thought. However, he notes that Francis "has not publicly laid claim" to a personalist theological approach (2018: 105). Perhaps *Lumen Fidei* might stand as such a claim, as well as an indication that we ought to make such a claim for ourselves.

history. In this context, “the light of faith is linked to concrete life-stories”; the faith-knowledge of the believer is formed in the context of, and in response to, specifically *historical* events (*LF* §9).

2.2. SIGHT

Francis also employs metaphors of sight. The "call" which faith hears is also a "promise" (*LF* §9). This promise is our redemption in Christ, and it is in terms of this promise that faith-knowledge becomes knowledge in the sense of sight: "a light for our way, guiding our journey through time" (*LF* §4). *Sight,* for Francis, is thus the knowledge to which we aspire in the temporal, interpersonal process of development expressed previously in terms of hearing.

Francis contrasts this with a 'visual' conception of knowledge that he associates with the figure of the 'ancient Greek knower'. He writes that "it has been claimed that an emphasis on sight was characteristic of Greek culture". The 'sight' of knowledge attributed to this figure aimed at "contemplation of the whole". It was conceived as being a wholly unilateral movement of thought "down from heaven directly to the eye", without "calling for a response" from the knower. Moreover, because of its unilateral nature, nor is the knower required to engage in the world and history – they are instead elevated to a point of "static contemplation" removed from rather than immersed in history, to which the world is disclosed in its totality (*LF* §29).

Knowledge as *sight* superficially appears similar to this 'Greek' conception, playing a circumscribing, *totalising* role. Similarly to the 'Greek' understanding, Francis writes, faith knowledge as sight "provides a vision of the entire journey and allows it to be situated within God's overall plan" (*LF* §29).

He also continues to develop an account of just what this knowledge amounts to. Francis writes: "without this vision, we would be left only with unconnected parts of an unknown whole" (*LF* §29). This introduces an important theme: knowledge as *sight* refers to *thematic* knowledge, in which the subject comes to encounter objects as expressible within (i.e. circumscribed by or unified within the language of) subject-object relations.[67] In the context of faith-knowledge, this situation is specifically an eschatological one: he writes that this light comes both from the past, in the "foundational memory" of God's self-revelation in Christ, and also from the future which is opened up to us by Christ (*LF* §4). That is, faith-knowledge

[67] This emphasis on thematicity (subjects and objects in action), as opposed to propositional (universals and particulars in representation) in his account of knowledge is something else that Francis shares with Buber, for whom thematic subjectivity or "experience" (2013: 4) is brought about by the transcendental conditions of subjectivity (the "primary word", "I-It") and not representational or propositional cognition (2013: 3).

as sight discloses the world in terms of divine thematicity, which is to say, their eschatological nature.[68]

This thematic nature of *sight* is also the basis for similarity with the 'Greek' notion. Buber characterises thematicity (which he calls "experience" (2013: 4)) as a feature of an "*I-It*" subjectivity stance (2013: 3). The objects of thematicity (the *It*) can be circumscribed by the subject (the *I*) in a variety of reductive ways – Buber gives the example of a tree, which can be looked upon "as a picture", "as movement", classified "as a species" with a specific "structure and mode of life", reduced to "an expression of [physical] law", or abstracted into "pure numerical relation" (2013: 6). In this vein, he writes, "the *I* of the... *I-It*... has no present, only the past". By this, he means that they exist in a world characterised by "cessation, suspension, a breaking off and cutting clear and hardening", in which the world is determined before the knowledge of the subject. Moreover, this subjectivity, like the 'Greek' subjectivity, is also removed from its object. Buber writes: "The man who experiences has not part in the world" [sic]. The experience does not link the experiencing subject to the world such that the world can transform him: rather, the experience is "'in him'", and he is transcendent of it (2013: 5).

However, the Biblical understanding of knowledge as sight is subject to the conditions of hearing such that it resists a *totalising* understanding. Francis writes: "hearing God's word is accompanied by a desire to see God's face" (*LF* §29). That is, knowledge as sight is acquired after an initial kindling of desire to attain it, which is prompted by God's word. Sight is a response to this hearing relationship. In this context, the 'sight' of faith is tied to the historical process of hearing. Francis writes: "faith 'sees' to the extent that it journeys, to the extent that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God's word" (*LF* §9). We might describe this image of faith as 'exploratory': God's word reveals to us a 'space' of novelty and transcendence. Faith is a matter of investigating these horizons, and coming to apprehend the world as it exists within them. Moreover, insofar as faith-knowledge as hearing is a matter of interpersonality, the systematising knowledge of sight is a function of this

[68] Indeed, for Francis, it is this ultimate thematicity which serves as the transcendental guarantee of thematicity as such: without this ordering, the subject "breaks down into the multiplicity of his desires", and "his life story disintegrates into a myriad of unconnected instants". In other words, unconditioned by any overarching thematicity, their subjectivity dissolves into a myriad of equivocal movements, and life becomes "a plethora of paths leading nowhere and forming a vast labyrinth" (*LF* §10).

relationship. As such, it also resists the image of the subject as removed or objective of the situation.

In this vein, Francis turns to St Augustine to temper this metaphor. He notes that Augustine uses "light" as a metaphor for faith, thereby invoking the metaphor of *sight.*[69] However, he writes, for Augustine

> **[j]ust as the word calls for a free response, so the light finds a response in the image which reflects it. Augustine can therefore associate hearing and seeing, and speak of "the word which shines forth within".[70] The light becomes, so to speak, the light of a word, because it is the light of a personal countenance, a light which… calls us and seeks to be reflected on our faces and to shine from within us.**
>
> (*LF* §33)

In short, Augustine used metaphors of 'light', and thus *sight,* in a way that integrated the conditions of *hearing.* Francis too, unlike the figure of 'the Greeks' he invokes, seeks to avoid totalising accounts of thematic knowledge.

3. TOTALITY AND 'SIGHT'

The understanding of faith presented above effectively repeats the schema presented by Francis' principle of *time is greater than space*. We noted how our acquisition of *sight* is limited by the conditions of *hearing,* interpersonality and temporality. These two conditions present what might be described as two 'horizons' of sight: a *qualitative* horizon, designating an intrinsic limitation of thematic faith-knowledge due to the nature of its object (God, as Other); and a *quantitative* horizon, designating limitation in time (that is, we will only acquire 'more' as we progress into the future). These horizons require us to acknowledge the partiality of our thematic faith knowledge.

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[69] Francis himself frequently makes reference throughout the document to the "light of faith" (*LF* §1, 2, 4, 6, 12, 30, 32, 34, 35, 46, 51, 57, 60), which "illumines" (e.g *LF* §1, 20, 32, 35, 55) the world for the believer. The use of this metaphor is closely associated with his metaphor of *sight* as pertaining to thematic knowledge: the metaphor of 'light' is always used in reference to some object which must be understood or navigated – for example, "our human relationships" (*LF* §32), "the material world" (*LF* §34), or "the path of all those who seek God" (*LF* §35). However, it is also worth noting that Francis is not particularly discriminating in his use of the image of light, and it sometimes reads as if it applies to all of faith, thereby reducing all faith-knowledge to 'sight'. Such a universalised reading is not consistent with his wider understanding of faith, particularly when we come to faith-knowledge in the mode of *touch,* which is categorically different from *sight*.

[70] *C.f. De Sancta Virginitate,* 48, 48: PL 40, 424-425.

3.1. INTERPERSONALITY: THE QUALITATIVE HORIZON

Buber contrasts thematic "*I-It*" subjectivity with an interpersonal "*I-Thou*" subjectivity. Whereas *I-It* subjectivity assumes a stance of *experience* in the face of which the world is circumscribed and reduced away, the stance of the *I-Thou* is one of *relation*[71] (2013: 4). Rather than being relative to some mediating or reductive schema, in relation, the *I* encounters the *Thou* immediately: "No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*" (2013: 9). Defying mediation, and thus reduction, the world is encountered "in a single whole" (2013: 6).

Moreover, this whole is not a whole in the sense of a unity circumscribed as such by some external principle. Buber describes *relation* with God as *Thou* as one of "unconditional exclusiveness": there is no other principle to which this *relation* stands in relation. In this regard, we do not *relate* to God as an object "in the world" – in such a relation, the world would serve as a third relatant (2013: 56). This does not mean negating the world, but rather a relativisation of the world to the *Thou.* Thus he writes, "But with no neighbour, and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens... all else lives in *his* light" (2013: 7).

In this way, for Buber, relation cannot be expressed thematically. True relation requires the absence of any condition whereby it can be expressed in terms of subject and object. Indeed, Buber himself recognises the impossibility of writing about *relation* in this regard. Although the word "*I-Thou"* itself implies a thematic relation, in an apophatic turn he writes: "When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing;* he has indeed nothing" (2013: 4). Similarly, he writes, when the subject "abhors the name, and believes himself to be godless... he addresses God" (2013: 54). To put it briefly, the unthematicity of *relation* means that the *Thou* is paradoxically encountered as absolutely singular and Other, beyond all *determinations* (including this sentence). Thus *relation* is intentional in an *apophatic* sense, being truly unthematic. This establishes a qualitative distinction between the *I-Thou* and the *I-It:* the *Thou* cannot be reduced to an *It* without losing its status as *Thou.*

Just as there is a qualitative limit to the *I-It,* arising from the nature of *relation*, Francis invokes a qualitative limit to *sight,* arising from the nature of interpersonality. Francis notes that all faith-knowledge is ultimately grounded in interpersonality, writing that

[71] For clarity's sake, we will use the italicised *relation* when using the term in Buber's technical sense. Unitalicised "relation" invokes a broader sense, which can encompass the former. We will also use "encounter" to describe instances of *relation*.

> **theology is more than simply an effort of human reason to analyze and understand... God... is a subject who makes himself known and perceived in an interpersonal relationship... [T]heology… is not just our discourse about God, but first and foremost the acceptance and the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the word which God speaks to us… about himself, for he is an eternal dialogue of communion, and he allows us to enter into this dialogue.**
>
> (*LF* §36)

Francis links this to a qualitative horizon of sight in his reflection on *idolatry*: God, addressing us as a person, presents himself as an Other. Others constitute a reality beyond ourselves, hence faith confronts us with the horizon of our knowledge and control. Idolatry, for Francis, attempts to assert *totality* against this alterity. Francis explicitly references Martin Buber here to define idolatry as "when a face addresses a face that is not a face".[72] In other words, idolatry treats a non-Other as if it were Other. Whereas an authentic Other defies *totalising* knowledge and control, Francis writes: "Before an idol, there is no risk that we will be called to abandon our security, for idols "have mouths but they cannot speak" (Ps. 15: 5)". Rather, "[i]dols exist... as a pretext for setting ourselves at the centre of reality and worshipping the work of our own hands" (*LF* §13). They present something that is grounded within us as the object to which we have to respond, setting up a hermetically sealed subjectivism, with no basis for novelty or transcendence.

In this vein, Francis describes idolatry as "the opposite of faith". He writes, Faith "is an invitation to turn to the source of the light, while respecting the mystery of [its] countenance" (*LF* §13). That is, faith seeks apprehension of God, but does not demand it, or pretend to possess it completely. Rather, it acknowledges and respects the conditions of 'hearing' as limits of sight. Idolatry is the opposite of faith in that it replaces this mysterious Other with something "into whose face we can look directly and whose origin we know" (*LF* §13).

In short, God is encountered as Other, interpersonally. The intrinsic nature of God as Other defies totalised knowledge. Because our sight is predicated upon this encounter, it is similarly limited. Thus sight has a *qualitative* horizon, whereby it is limited by the qualitative nature of its object.

[72] *C.f. Die Erzählungen der Chassidim*, 793

3.2. THE QUANTITATIVE HORIZON

However, as we have seen, Francis also invokes the possibility of thematic knowledge of God. The qualitative horizon is not all-exclusive. Indeed, even though the objects that Francis talks about the 'light' of faith illumining are not God Himself, but rather aspects of creation and our lives within it,[73] these illumined objects are, for Francis, illumined in relation to the divine reality. As such, knowledge of them and knowledge of God cannot be entirely separated, and Francis seems to acknowledge this when he writes that faith as a light invites us to "explore ever more fully the horizon which it illumines, all the better to know the object of our love" (i.e. God) (*LF* §36).

This might seem confusing: if our knowledge of God is, at root, interpersonal, and this interpersonality involves the alterity of unconditionally exclusive *relation*, then it seems impossible for thematic knowledge to follow from it. Surely the qualitative distinction between *I-Thou* and *I-It* invoked by Buber precludes any pass between *relation* on the one hand, and thematicity on the other?

Buber himself approaches this issue when he reflects back upon the possibility of expressing his mysticism at all. He writes: "The description of God as a Person is indispensable for everyone who like myself means by 'God'... him who... enters into a direct relation with us men". The reason he gives for this is as follows: talk of God as Person refers, in the language of Spinoza,[74] to a divine attribute – "personal being" - which is known to us directly "in its quality as an attribute", even if God in His "essential being" can only be encountered and known unthematically (2013: *Postscript* §6). That is, talk of God as 'Person' refers precisely to what is intelligible to thematic knowledge in relation to His Personhood. 'Personal being', as the object of thematic knowledge, is no more than what that knowledge attributes to the occasion of relation, plus further thematic reflection on this. As such, when we talk about God as Person, we are (by definition) not talking about anything inaccessible by the unthematic nature of *relation*.

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[73] "all reality" (*LF* §1); "the future" (*LF* §3); "*every aspect* of human existence" (*LF* §4); "our human experience" (*LF* §6); "our passage through time" (*LF* §12); "the gloom of death" (*LF* §17); "the origin and end of life" (*LF* §20); "our steps" (*LF* §26); "all reality", and "all our human relationships" (*LF* §30); "the questions of our own time about truth", and "the material world" (*LF* §34); "the path of all those who seek God" (*LF* §35); any "human experience" or "journey of man" (*LF* §35); "the entire cosmos and all of history" (*LF* §48); "our life" (*LF* §51); "all our relationships in society" (*LF* §54); and "death" (*LF* §56)

[74] "...that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance" (*Ethics* I.IV). Buber and Francis part company on this point – as we shall see in chapter 6, Francis' metaphysics is one of Thomist analogical participation.

For Buber, then, the pass from the unthematic *relation* of *I-Thou* to the thematic knowledge of *I-It* is ultimately not so much a pass as a qualitative leap: the *I-Thou* encounters, and then through some correspondence this encountering itself inscribes itself within the subjectivity of the *I-It.* In illustration of this, Buber invokes the image of the "'primitive' man", who relates to the moon, and then recalls the relation: initially, "he has in him only the dynamic, stirring image of the moon's effect, streaming through his body". This effect eventually becomes associated with less intimate features of the sensory landscape: "Out of this the image of the moon personally achieving the effect only gradually emerges. Only now, that is to say, does the memory of the unknown that is nightly taken into his being begin to kindle and take shape as the doer and bringer of the effect" (Buber, 2013: 9). That is, even when our thematic knowledge purports to be about the *Thou*, it is only ever truly about the intuitions which we come to associate with *relation* – even when we purportedly 'identify' the *Thou* (here, the moon), all we do is learn to associate a given set of intuitions (roundness, shininess, distance etc) with *relation*.

This does not lead Buber to discard experience entirely: for Buber, *form* is a "mixture of *Thou* and *It*". He asserts that when we relate to God, this serves as the occasion for communication in a "mixture of divine and human power". Buber writes: "He who is sent out in the strength of revelation takes with him, in his eyes, an image of God; however far this exceeds the senses, yet he takes it with him in the eye of the spirit, in that visual power of his spirit which is not metaphorical but wholly real". This look shapes the world as we encounter it: an "essential quality" of *relation* persists in form such that it becomes a site of "theophany", or *relation* to the divine (Buber, 2013: 81). Nevertheless, form is precisely a *mixture* of *Thou* and *It,* each aspect retaining an ultimate distinction rather than being mediated together. Thus form loses its theophanic potential when "objectification" (i.e. the *It* aspect) grows too great (Buber, 2013: 82). The qualitative distinction stands.

However, despite this distinction, there is a pass between them. For Buber, we are nevertheless able to associate particular intuitions with the event of *relation*. We are, more significantly, nevertheless able to identify the theophanic potential of particular forms. On the one hand, this knowledge ultimately remains to do with the extrinsic features of *relation* – it tells us about its attributes, or its effects on wider reality. On the other, this does provide an (admittedly thin) ontology of *relation* itself: it is the kind of thing which bears out these effects. To put it simply, we cannot speak directly of *relation* in itself. However, we can talk

of the forms in which it occurs, *as* forms, which in turn involves speaking of *relation* indirectly as 'that by virtue of which they are forms'.

This seems to be reflected in Francis' portrayal of thematic theological knowledge. We noted how the objects illumined to *sight* are objects of thematicity. However, these objects are nevertheless known in relation to the divine as it effects them: when Francis talks about God directly in the encyclical, he invariably does so in terms of God's historical action in providence, covenants, or fulfilment of promises – that is, in terms of God's bearing out of effects upon the world.[75] In this vein, as we previously noted, the light of faith discloses objects to *sight* in terms of their eschatology, and this 'light' itself stems from God's self-revelation in Christ, and the future promises which this opens up (*LF* §4).

In this vein, for Francis, there is the possibility for thematic faith knowledge, albeit with a strict qualitative horizon. This knowledge is ultimately dependent upon associated intuitions arising from interactions between God and history, bringing us to our second condition of faith construed in terms of *hearing:* learning is a process in time. Thus there is a second, *quantitative* horizon, designating the progress of the process of acquisition of this knowledge. However, insofar as this horizon is conditioned by the interpersonal self-revelation of God in history (which serves as the condition for the intuitions from which *sight* is derived) the movement of the quantitative horizon is ultimately governed by the mystery that lies behind the qualitative horizon of divine alterity.

In this vein, Francis writes, the countenance of the divine mystery "will unveil itself in its own good time". However, "[f]aith by its very nature demands renouncing the immediate possession that sight would appear to offer" (*LF* §13). That is, although it is theoretically possible to attain thematic knowledge of God, we do not automatically possess this knowledge. Rather, we acquire it in time, in a process ultimately mediated by God, whose sovereignty over this process (and thus the unpredictability of the process) lies precisely in the alterity of the divine Person. As such, Francis associates idolatry not just with a disregard for divine alterity, but also with impatience: he notes that Israel turns to idolatry specifically while *waiting* for Moses on Sinai (*LF* §13). Thus the interpersonality of *hearing* ultimately grounds its historicity, and thereby also limits *sight*.

This brings together themes of self-assertion and time in a manner that leads neatly back to Francis' principle in *EG* §222-3, to which we were introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

[75] *C.f.* e.g. *LF* §12, 15, 17, 23, 24, 28

This principle calls on us to accept the limitations of our current situation, which involves allowing time for tensions to be resolved, rather than attempting to achieve totality in the present. Moreover, Francis associates the failure to do this with "trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion": the imperative to ignore limitation is, at base, an attempt to assert the self. The connection with the twin horizons of *sight* is fairly clear here: the principle of 'time is greater than space' invites us to accept the quantitative horizon. Moreover, we can see from Francis' identification of the failure to do this with the drive to self-assertion how this principle also invites us to accept the qualitative horizon, and refrain from idolatry.

To briefly summarise the above: Buber identifies our thematic knowledge of the world as arising from an interpersonal mode of knowledge, or *relation*. This gives our thematic knowledge a qualitative horizon, arising from the unthematicity of the other (the *Thou*). Francis, following Buber, identifies our thematic theological knowledge (which he refers to metaphorically as *sight*) as being predicated upon interpersonality, which involves the irreducible alterity of the Other to thematic knowledge. Thus for both, thematic knowledge of the Other/God has a *qualitative* horizon. However, both nevertheless affirm the possibility of thematic knowledge of the Other/God in the form of reflection upon the thematic elements of *relation* itself, if not the other to whom the subject relates. For Francis, we identified this with God's action in history. However, Francis explicitly notes, the historical process of *relation* is governed by God who, as Other, possesses a freedom which places this process out of our control. Thus there is also an inescapable *quantitative* horizon to our thematic knowledge, governed by the temporal structure of God's actions in history. Francis figures knowledge specifically in terms of the conditions presented by these *qualitative* and *quantitative* horizons via the metaphor of knowledge as *hearing.*

4. TOUCH

But what exactly is this *relation*? Francis answers this question via the metaphor of *touch,* which emerges from his discussion of the relationship between love and "Christian faith".

4.1. LOVE

Francis writes that "Christian faith is centred on Christ" (*LF* §15). However, this faith "does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as Jesus himself sees them, with his own eyes: it is a participation in his way of seeing" (*LF* §18). In other words, Christian faith 'sees' through participation in Christ's *sight*; it is a matter of participating in Christ's subjectivity, apprehending his thematic knowledge.

So how do we attain this subjectivity? The answer is through "love". Francis describes love as "a kind of knowledge", which he further describes as "a relational way of viewing the world", and "a form of shared knowledge, vision through the eyes of another". It is "an experience of truth... it opens our eyes to see reality in a new way, in union with the beloved" (*LF* §27). In other words, love is a matter of *relation* which transforms us such that our *sight* operates in a particular way.

In this context, faith originates in an encounter with God in His love: "Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us..." (*LF* §4). Francis writes:

> **Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfilment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us. Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time.**
>
> (*LF* §4)

This reference to faith, here understood in terms of *sight,* as "supernatural gift", as well as the precedence of God's love over our existence, indicates that *sight* arises out of this encounter, which happens prior to it.

This transformation occurs at a primordial and holistic level. Francis quotes Romans 10:10, stating that "[o]ne believes with the heart". He associates the heart as the nexus of all the various aspects of human being with its being "where we become open to truth and love", writing: "In the Bible, the heart is the core of the human person, where all his or her different dimensions intersect: body and spirit, interiority and openness to the world and to others, intellect, will and affectivity" (*LF* §26).

This primordiality is what is expressed when we talk about the fatherly nature of God's love. Abraham recognises in God's voice "a profound call which was always present at the core of his being". Moreover, God's promise is one of children, or new life. In this way, God reveals himself to be "the source of all life", the creator. From these combined elements, faith thus reveals God's relationship of "Fatherhood" to us, and creation as a whole: we relate to him at a fundamental level – that of our very being, which God reveals to us is an expression of our origins in Him (*LF* §11). The transformation elicited in the faithful is equally primordial. This is expressed by St. Paul, also in terms of God's fatherhood, who Francis quotes as

teaching that, in accepting the life of faith, "believers become a new creation; they receive a new being" as "God's children" (cf. Rom 8: 15) (*LF* §19).

This new being consists in "the acknowledgement of a primordial and radical gift which upholds our lives" – that is, that God created and sustains us, and is the author of all goods. However, for Francis, this acknowledgment is more than intellectual recognition of fact: rather, it is "openness" to this "primordial gift" (*LF* §19). In other words, our response to love involves a transformation of our selves.

In this way, the idea of 'belief with the heart' also invokes the idea of faith not just as being loved, but as loving *back* on our part. Francis notes that belief can be associated with "falling in love". Love is more than an affect. Rather, it is a kind of existential stance that "aims at union with the beloved" (*LF* §27). We might associate this with the transformation elicited by God's love: Francis writes that true love "unifies all the elements of our person and becomes a new light pointing the way to a great and fulfilled life" (*LF* §27). This returns us to the theme of the heart as the 'core' of the person, in which all its elements coincide. God's self-revelation leads to belief, which kindles love in the person. This in turn leads to the fundamental reorientation of the person towards God.

We can understand this seeking unity as lying at the heart of the transformation in which we come to adopt Christ's subjectivity. Francis writes,

> **...In faith, Christ is not simply the one in whom we believe, the supreme manifestation of God's love; he is also the one with whom we are united precisely in order to believe. Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things… with his own eyes: it is a participation in his way of seeing. In many areas in our lives we trust others who know more than we do... Jesus, the Son of God, is the one who makes God known to us (cf. Jn 1:18). Christ's life, his way of knowing the Father and living in complete and constant relationship with him, opens up new and inviting vistas for human experience. Saint John… [uses] various forms of the verb "to believe". In addition to "believing that" what Jesus tells us is true, John also speaks of "believing" Jesus and "believing in" Jesus. We "believe" Jesus when we accept his word... We "believe in" Jesus when we personally welcome him into our lives and journey towards him, clinging to him in love and following in his footsteps along the way.**
>
> (*LF* §18)

The key to understanding this complex passage is Francis statement that Christ is "the supreme manifestation of God's love". Francis means multiple things by this: firstly, Christ

provides us with thematic knowledge, telling us 'that' certain things about this love are true. That is, the historical life of Christ exhibits God's love to *sight.* However, we also "believe in" Christ himself, *as* this supreme manifestation. Francis identifies this "believing in" with entering into a personal relationship; to "believe in" is to "trust", and to relate to personally therein. That is, we relate to Christ as the love to which we are open, and to which we thus respond in love, which is directed at God. In other words, we encounter God's love *in* Christ, and seek union with God in love in union with Christ. This 'believing in' involves 'believing that' what Christ witnesses to is true, but is also prior to this.

Our participation in Christ's *sight*, then, is not exhaustive of our relationship with God the Father – or even Christ. Rather, it is an expression of a more primordial relationship with Christ, which mediates our response to God's 'fatherly' love. We encounter God's love in Christ, which enkindles love in ourselves that leads us to seek unity with God. In turn, this love enables us to achieve the unity with Christ in which we can share in his *sight*: Francis writes that "[t]he Christian can see with the eyes of Jesus and share in his mind… because he or she shares in his love, which is the Spirit. In the love of Jesus, we receive in a certain way his vision" (*LF* §21). That is, we adopt Christ's subjectivity because Christ Himself loves God in the manner that is elicited as response from us by God's love, which we encounter in Christ Himself.

Finally, this point about participating in Christ's *sight* in order to recognise His divinity brings us back to the question of the pass from unthematic *relation* in encounter to thematic knowledge about that *relation* on the other. We noted that, for Buber, this pass is made through reflection upon the intuitions arising around the *relation*. In a similar vein, Francis asserts that recognising the divinity of Christ is only possible given one's prior transformation by and in love: "Without being conformed to [Christ] in love... it is impossible to confess him as Lord" (*LF* §21). That is, we can only recognise the *relation* in Christ as *relation* through participating in His own thematic knowledge – that is, we might say, through reflecting in the same way as He does. Thus our *relation* to God in love is not just the condition for thematic knowledge of God, but is also the condition for thematic knowledge which recognises the encounter as such.

To summarise, then: we encounter God's love in Christ. This encounter elicits a fundamental transformation in us, in which we we enter into a primordial (that is, prior to thematic knowledge) economy of love. This economy involves a loving response on our part wherein we seek unity with God. In seeking unity with God in this way, we are conformed to Christ,

who loves God in the manner elicited from us. This results in our participating in Christ's subjectivity, or *sight*. Moreover, doing so enables to recognise that this process has taken place.

4.2. THE THIRD METAPHOR: TOUCH

Francis indicates the distinction between this primordial 'encounter' in love and its expression in the thematic knowledge which emerges from it by way of a third metaphor: that of "touch". Francis writes, "the light of love is born when our hearts are touched and we open ourselves to the interior presence of the beloved, who enables us to recognize his mystery" (*LF* §31). That is, God's self-communication in love precedes and enkindles our own love.

The word itself ought to be read in both a metaphorical and a literal sense. The metaphorical sense is of 'touching hearts'; of the fundamental reorientation of the person by love, towards the beloved. We might think that this understanding of faith is better expressed as 'being touched'. However, we must recall that love, for Francis, is not merely passive – it seeks unity with the beloved, and thus has an active component. In short, love 'touches back'. To this end, he also writes, "In faith, we can touch [Christ] and receive the power of his grace" (*LF* §31). In short, 'love' is a dialogical economy of relation between two persons, wherein we are fundamentally reoriented as subjects. Touch refers to this fundamental and primordial reorientation, and our equally primordial response.

Secondly, there is the literal sense: "through the sacraments [Jesus] continues to touch us today" (*LF* §31). In the sacraments (specifically the Eucharist), we literally touch, and are touched by, Christ. Although this does not establish an essential relationship between the two different senses of touching, by juxtaposing them Francis begins to associate faith not only with 'supernatural' realities, but with the physical, natural objects and practices by which it is structured. This is further developed when, in the context of a discussion about the relationship between faith and reason (specifically with regards to faith's ability to tell us about the material world) he notes that "love is always lived out *in the body* and spirit" (*LF* §34; emphasis mine). In short, *touch* here refers to the material condition of this knowledge.

This theme of the significance of materiality is a frequent one in *LF,* specifically in relation to hope. This connection is exemplified when Francis writes: "Our culture has lost its sense of God's tangible presence and activity in our world". He notes that the historicity of Christ speaks against this, offering an historical hope by demonstrating that God acts in history:

"Christians, on the contrary, profess their faith in God's tangible and powerful love which really does act in history and determines its final destiny". He then continues to describe this love as "a love that can be encountered… fully revealed in Christ's passion, death and resurrection" (*LF* §17). This emphasis on encounter here intimates the theme of touch: it is not just that we can see the outworkings of divine love in history; we can also *encounter that love itself.* Our historical hope comes not just from a removed apprehension of God's activity, but in relating to God Himself. In this vein also, Francis invokes the 'trustworthiness' of God's love, either specifically nominated as 'God's'[76] or Christ,[77] as well as the theme of divine 'reliability', which might also be interpreted along these lines.[78] We saw previously that Francis conceives of 'trust' as a mode of interpersonal *relation*. As such, we might say that for Francis, the very historicity of *touch* facilitates the *relation* that instantiates it.

Touch, then, inscribes *relation* to God into historical existence. We might recall Buber's concept of *form* here: for Buber, we find occasion to relate to God in particular worldly objects. The materiality of *touch* could be understood as a parallel notion: it is encounter occasioned by particular historical objects.

4.3. KNOWLEDGE AS TOUCH VS KNOWLEDGE AS SIGHT

In a discussion on other religions, Francis writes: "The light of faith in Jesus also illumines the path of all those who seek God, and makes a specifically Christian contribution to dialogue with the followers of the different religions... God is light and he can be found also by those who seek him with a sincere heart". That is, all who seek God can attain a measure of faith-knowledge as *sight.* This includes those who are not Christian. He writes: "Because faith is a way, it also has to do with the lives of those men and women who, though not believers, nonetheless desire to believe and continue to seek. To the extent that they are sincerely open to love and set out with whatever light they can find, they are already… on the path leading to faith." What is significant here is that Francis takes up the theme of *sight* as a process of gradual development. Importantly, however, he does so in the context of the concepts of love and fullness, writing: "Any-one who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God… for it is characteristic of the divine light to brighten our eyes whenever we walk towards the fullness of love" (*LF* §35).

[76] *C.f. LF* §4, 23, 51
[77] *C.f. LF* §4, 42, 53
[78] *C.f. LF* §15, 16, 17, 42, 50,

We saw previously how Francis conceives of 'fullness' as an eschatological term: 'fullness' represents the fulfilment of the present. However, we also saw that, for Francis, we exist within 'limitation', unable to lay claim to this fullness because our *sight* is bounded by qualitative and quantitative horizons. Moreover, we saw that the qualitative horizon is a function of God's alterity, and that this horizon governs the quantitative one.

Here, Francis seems to associate love with fullness. In this vein, in the course of his discussion of the role of theology, Francis writes: "Since faith is a light, it draws us into itself, inviting us to explore ever more fully the horizon which it illumines, all the better to know the object of our love" (*LF* §36). Here, Francis identifies faith-knowledge as *sight,* pushing forwards at its horizons in pursuit of that which we love. Note that Francis is not using the word "object" in a sense that implies thematicity to love: in the same paragraph, Francis declares that "God cannot be reduced to an object", and affirms the interpersonal dimension of this irreducibility when he declares that this is because "God is a subject who makes himself known and perceived in interpersonal relationship". In this vein, God here is an "object" in an apophatic sense, the use of the term being necessitated by the nature of language rather than selected for its adequacy, much as Buber is forced to talk about *relation* in a way more proper to the *I-It.*

The fulfilment of this process, for Francis, lies in the achievement of love itself. He asserts that "[a]ny-one who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God, is already sustained by his help, for it is characteristic of the divine light to brighten our eyes whenever we walk towards the fullness of love" (*LF* §36). That is, what sight seeks is attained in love. Similarly, in his discussion of the Decalogue, he writes that by following the commandments, faith "professes the love of God…. and lets itself be guided by this love in order to journey towards the fullness of communion with God" (*LF* §46). In other words, it is through the economy of love that we attain fullness in the communion of that love. Moreover, in a discussion of ethics, Francis writes that "our life is illumined to the extent that it enters into the space opened by... love, to the extent that it becomes, in other words, a path and praxis leading to the fullness of love" (*LF* §51). Here, love is not just identified with fullness, but attainment of that fullness is explicitly presented as the principle which governs the progressive attainment of *sight.* Similarly, he describes Christ as bringing "a new light", which he identifies as "the fullness of God's faithful love" (*LF* §59).

Similarly, Francis writes, if love is not directed at an Other, it merely circulates within ourselves and "falls prey to fickle emotions and cannot stand the test of time" (*LF* §27). This

can be read in the sense of the breakdown of the subject in idolatry when we contrast it with Francis' vision of true love, which, in being directed at an other, "unifies all the elements of our person and becomes a new light pointing the way to a great and fulfilled life" (*LF* §27). That is, the orientation of the subject to God in love provides the field in which value becomes intelligible as something inherent in objects and not merely the product of the subject's will. Love is thus a kind of 'light' in which the objects of knowledge are disclosed to the subject as knowable in specifically moral circumstances – that is, as the foundation for moral *sight.*

These examples serve to re-present the qualitative horizon in positive terms. This horizon does not merely designate the limit(ation) of *sight*: it also designates the *excess* of *touch.* What we encounter through interpersonal *relation* is the fullness that provides the horizon into which our thematic knowledge expands. Thematic knowledge attempts to (partially) express what is present primordially in the economy of love that is *touch.*

5. THE 'LOGIC'

This schema provides a particular structure to theological knowledge. We might say that, for Francis, faith-knowledge occurs in two registers. The first is a register which he refers to as *touch*. This knowledge is acquired through the inhabiting of a relationship of love with God as Other, and is prior to, and the condition of, thematic faith knowledge - which Francis refers to as *sight*. Being prior to thematic faith knowledge, we might describe it as *unthematic:* in line with its 'object' (this term being used ironically or apophatically), it cannot be circumscribed by thematic knowledge. We might say that it stands in *excess* of *sight*, which thus has a *qualitative* horizon.

Sight emerges through reflection upon the experience of this encounter in time. Thus the object of sight is more properly the effect of God's action in the world upon worldly phenomena. Following Buber, we might say that the knowledge of God therein is knowledge in *attribution:* what we know of God is what we attribute to God via the sensory components of His action in history, as disclosed to us thematically. *Sight* is thematic, and antecedent to *touch,* thematising our existence in relation to this unthematic encounter. This process is bounded by a *quantitative* horizon, which refers to the range of possible knowledge as limited by the provision in history of its object.

Both of these horizons indicate a partiality of our thematic theological knowledge: on the one hand, the quantitative horizon indicates the continual possibility of more which can be

said. On the other, the qualitative horizon indicates the necessity of more which *cannot* be said – that there is a hard limit to our thematic knowledge, beyond this possibility.

This partiality provides a natural limit to what we can express in thematic terms – for example, in terms of precepts (universal types quantifying over particular objects in situations), and, *modus ponens,* of particular sets of precepts. This excess implies a certain plurality with regards to how we can articulate the life of faith: at the risk of cliché, there is more to faith than can be summed up in any given set of descriptions or rules.

6. WORKED EXAMPLE: MERCY AND THE MORAL LAW

This is illustrated most clearly in Francis' conception of *mercy*. In analysing this, we can also present the basis for a response to the concerns of the fifth *dubium,* with which we began this section.

We noted previously that *AL* §303 intimates a conceptual space beyond the determination of particular actions according to the particular set of universal principles posited by the moral law. Moreover, we noted that this conceptual space is in some sense value-laden, but not *morally* value-laden – that is, there are divine requirements attached to it, other than moral maxims.

6.1. THE NATURE OF MERCY

One criticism that may be raised is that, although we have shown the thematically expressed range of faith knowledge to be distinct from morality, it may still be coextensive. What is to say that it is not exhausted by this? What is to say that the 'range' of thematised faith knowledge extends beyond the range of its realisation in morality?

We can find an example of an element of thematic faith-knowledge which is not coextensive with morality in Francis' understanding of mercy, as articulated in the Papal Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (2015). Francis understands mercy by way of its relation to justice. Justice, as Francis refers to it here, pertains to the objective demands which arise in the context of law: he describes it as "a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law", and as "that which is rightly due to each individual" (*MV* §20). In this vein, where the Bible makes reference to divine justice, it is "understood as full observance of the Law and the behaviour of every good Israelite in conformity with God's commandments". However, he notes that this ought not to be interpreted in a "legalistic" way, writing that "in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God's will" (*MV* §20).

Justice, as Francis conceives of it then, has two components, which are inseparable: the requirements of the law, and a corresponding apportioning of dessert. That is, it involves two epistemic judgments: firstly, in the sense of representing particular acts under universal laws. Secondly, the agent of the acts in question is represented in their status as the particular agent of those actions in terms of universal categories of guilt, which is entailed by the nature of those laws. To put it another way, judgment in the juridical sense is a matter of judgment in the epistemological sense.

In relating particulars to universals, epistemological judgment is thematic: it represents particulars under universals, thereby determining them as tokens of types. In other words, the world is given over to the subject by it in terms of objects, which it represents in terms of other objects. Because the discourse of justice is one of judgment, it too is thematic by implication. As such, it is to be identified in the context of faith-knowledge with *sight*.

However, the judgments of justice are not merely that of relation to a formal law in light of which various particulars are represented under formal legal categories. Rather, it is also in terms of a relationship to God (more specifically, His will) which is expressed in these terms. That is, justice is a thematization of our relationship to God, specifically in relation to His will.

Following on from our previous reflections on the twin horizons of thematic knowledge, we would thus expect this conception of justice to manifest limitations. Firstly, there would be some dimension of our relationship to God which resists expression in the thematic language of justice, specifically because of its thematicity. Francis does not reflect on this. However, he does illustrate the existence of a *quantitative* horizon, whereby there is some element of our relationship to God 'beyond' expression in terms of justice. We might say, there is a *complement* to our ethical or justice-based discourse in terms of our relationship to God.

This second horizon is intimated in Francis' conception of *mercy,* which he articulates in terms of the relationship between justice and its foundation in our loving relationship to God. He writes: "Jesus speaks several times of the importance of faith over and above the observance of the law". Francis highlights in particular Christ's response to the Pharisees in Matt. 9:13: "Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups – the just and the sinners – Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation". Consequently, we cannot "draw the line at a formal respect for the law". Rather, "Jesus... goes beyond the law" (*MV* §20).

This 'going beyond' the law is a movement in which judgment becomes relativized to the divine love which structures the history in which that judgment takes place. Francis finds this relativization exemplified in Hosea (6:6): in this, Israel had strayed from the law such that it "deserved just punishment" as an "unfaithful people". However, God put aside anger, showing that "God's anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever". In doing so, God 'goes beyond' the law, setting aside judgment according to its *determinations* (specifically, of "unfaithful people") in "an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice" (*MV* §21). In short, love mediates the judgments of justice, 'going beyond them'. This mediation inaugurates a new mode of relating to God, in which "one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God" (*MV* §21). That is, mercy is that which is 'beyond' these judgments.

We see the correspondence between this economy and Francis' epistemology in his gnomic statement that "God's justice is his mercy" (*MV* §20). We noted previously that Francis identifies the essence of justice as lying in submission to the will of God. We can now see how God's mercy can be seen as his justice: this setting aside is God's will. To embrace this setting aside is to submit to God's will – which is to say that God's justice paradoxically fulfils itself in the overturning of its judgments over us in our disobedience.

This enables us to understand the relationship between mercy and love as Francis understands it in relation to knowledge. Just as faith-knowledge as touch, which subsists within the economy of God's love, provides the horizon for knowledge as sight (which involves judgment in the epistemic sense), so love also mediates the universal law and the agents over which it determines. In this context, 'mercy' denotes the range of thematic knowledge within the overarching quantitative horizon of thematic knowledge that "envelopes and surpasses" the range of justice (*MV* §21).

We find confirmation of this in *Misericordia et Misera* (2016). In this document, Francis describes mercy in terms that are analogous to the function of *sight* in relation to love and *touch*. Firstly, just as the loving gaze embodies love, and thereby serves as the medium for the primordial encounter in *touch*,[79] mercy "*renews and redeems* because it is the meeting of two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet the human heart" (*MM* §16). Mercy is further portrayed as the medium for *touch* when Francis describes it as initiating

[79] Moving beyond our selection of documents, Todd notes that Francis talks about the encounter with mercy in a variety of literal gazes, as well as various other modes of interaction (2018: 24-28). We should be reminded by this that, just as the word 'sight' is used metaphorically, by extension 'the gaze' need not be a literal matter of the eyes falling upon some object of attention.

transformation on the level of "creation", which, as we saw previously, Francis associates with the primordial encounter of *touch* through metaphors of fatherhood: "I come to realize that I am truly a "new creation" (Gal 6:15): I am loved, therefore I exist… I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy" (*MM* §16).

Finally, just as we feel the *touch* of God's love in the loving gaze of others, so too are we *touched* by the mercy of others. Repeating the haptic metaphor in terms of images of proximity, Francis notes that "mercy becomes visible and tangible in specific and powerful acts" - specifically those in which we "draw near to our brothers and sisters" (*MM* §16). This encounter is not merely with one another however: in doing so, we also attain "closeness to Christ" (*MM* §16).

6.2. GOODNESS AND RIGHTNESS

In short, we might say that mercy is the *complement* of judgment, the two being mediated by love. This provides us with the means to understand our next key concept: that of being 'right by' God. A person can be measured according to this thematic expression of love, apart from their measure according to the moral law; God's exercise of mercy indicates the existence of this excess.

But what does it mean to be 'measured' by this excess? What *is* it to be 'right by' mercy, as opposed to merely good?

Francis seems to present mercy as a knowledge,[80] analogous to moral knowledge. Firstly, they are both acquired from the same source, and in relation to one another. According to Francis, Christ's passion is the definitive instance of justice, and its overtaking by mercy. Francis writes, "God's justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God's judgment on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life" (*MV* §21).[81] That is, in Christ's passion, we encounter mercy in its fullness, in the overcoming of judgment in its fullness: we gain vision of mercy in its fullness through transcending the horizon of judgment in its fullness, of which it is the complement.

[80] By 'a knowledge', I mean a system of concepts which can be brought to bear upon the world in order to navigate it.

[81] We should read this equation of mercy and justice here as above, in terms of justice's self-overturning in God's will (to which justice demands obedience) for mercy.

In this vein, just as more conventional fields of thematic theological knowledge (i.e. *sight*) arise from *touch,* Francis argues that this historical mediation makes mercy illustrative of the primordial nature of God's love, which in turn reveals its subsistence within this love: Francis writes, "the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love"" (*MV* §6). We saw previously how God's fatherhood relates to the primordiality of His love, which we engage with on the level of our very being. By revealing his mercy in history - in material, bodily realities – we are led to apprehend the primordial nature of God's love as embodied in this mercy. In this way, mercy makes knowledge as touch visible to knowledge as sight as the ground of this sight, thereby confirming its subsistence in love.

Moreover, as with other *sight,* this revelation in its fullness occurs in a manner that precludes *total* thematisation. Firstly, Francis describes Christ as "the face of the father's mercy" (*MV* §1). The use of the term 'face' here is redolent of Francis' reflections on otherness and idolatry: true others defy our attempts to circumscribe them in thought and power, appearing as a 'face' that is free of our control. This is further intimated when Francis writes that Christ reveals mercy in "his entire *person*" (*MV* §1, emphasis mine). In other words, there is a qualitative horizon to our apprehension of mercy, corresponding to the qualitative difference between *touch* and *sight*.

Furthermore, Francis writes that the incarnation occurred in "the 'fullness of time' (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to [God's] plan of salvation" (*MV* §1). That is, God's mediation of mercy in its fullness is mediated by history, being actualised only at a certain point in time and not before.

This is developed further in *EG* and *AL,* which recapitulate and expand upon the phenomenological imagery of *LS.* Oltvai reads in *EG* and *AL* that, for Francis, the encounter of grace is the experience of "being phenomenalized in a certain way" by the gaze of Christ as Other (Oltvai, 2018: 318).[82] Moreover, this gives it an experiential dimension, tied to this being-intended: "The aesthetic experience of love is expressed in that 'gaze' which contemplates other persons as ends in themselves" (*AL* §128, in Oltvai, 2018: 318). In other words, the love in which the law is mediated appears as the being-subject-to a certain configuration of *sight*.

[82] *C.f. EG* §120; §141; *AL* §291.

This contemplation of the Other (that is, of the subject by Christ) "as ends in themselves" refers to the way this gaze "suspends the general in favour of the particular". Oltvai associates this with the pastoral ideal of "accompaniment", which "makes present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze", and "teaches us us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other [la terre sacré de l'autre]" (*EG* §169; in Oltvai, 2018: 319).

Francis elaborates that "[o]ne who accompanies others has to realize that the person's [*di soggeto* – the subject's] situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can know fully from without" (*EG* §172; in Oltvai, 2018: 319). That is, as Oltvai puts it, the suspension of the general expressed in accompaniment amounts to a recognition of "the other's inability to fully become an object of knowledge… as her ownmost reality or characteristic… as a phenomenon that pre- or exceeds the norm" (2018: 319).

In short, for Francis, being loved is a matter of being viewed in one's own transcendence. Love is embodied in a gaze that recognises the absolute horizon of its knowledge about the person upon which it falls. Thus Francis associates this mysterious (here perhaps best read in both senses of the term) dimension of the subject with the mystery of God: when we gaze in such a manner on others, we are moved to a "certain dread" (*AL* §127; in Oltvai, 2018: 319). That is, we recognise in their alterity the alterity of God, and its corresponding sacredness. Thus, as Oltvai puts it, seeing the Other "incites a 'fear of God,' a 'fear and trembling' – or, in post-conciliar vocabulary, 'wonder and awe'" (2018: 319). In this vein, *EG* §88 renders this in language reminiscent of Buber, describing the Gospel and its call to evangelism through the loving encounter with the Other as telling us to "run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others" (in Oltvai, 2018: 319). Oltvai notes that the French translation displays this Buberian theme even more explicitly, speaking of ""*le risque de la rencontre avec le visage de l'autre,*" "the risk of the encounter with *the face of the other*"" (Oltvai, 2018: 319-20).

We noted above that, for Francis, we only attain faith-knowledge as *sight* after being *touched.* This has implications for our knowledge of moral responsibility (i.e. of what justice demands from us): for Francis, responsibility becomes apparent to us only after first being gazed upon (2018: 322). Moreover, we saw how the alterity of the Other is the alterity of the divine. It is thus in recognising *their gazing upon the subject* that our responsibility to them

appears. Christian life is at heart a response to the gaze of "the Father's face as glimpsed in the face of Christ, and Christ's as glimpsed in the face of the Other" (2018: 323).[83]

This necessitates a particular approach to the application of moral norms in a pastoral context: a loving gaze recognises the absolute horizon that arises as a function of the transcendence of the Other. As a result, *sight* cannot reduce the Other to a single set of *determinate* judgments. Consequently there are no moral generic situations, because pastoral discernment always takes place in the context of an encounter with the face of the Other - in all its irreducible, holy particularity (2018: 321). Hence Francis chastises those who apply rules as if they were *totalizable:* they are guilty of a "self-absorbed promethean neopelaganism", and "trust only in their own powers". That is, they assert themselves as wielders of the rules over the Other, negating the transcendence of the individual to whom those rules are applied (*EG* §94; in Oltvai, 2018: 321).

This goes some way to indicating just in what the knowledge of mercy consists: love recognises that law is always mediated by the relationship in the course of which it is applied – and that this relationship, by virtue of the transcendent nature of its relatants, exceeds any specific determinations.

It is the awareness of the irreducible particularity of the individual, that stands in excess of the general *determinations* of *totalised* schemas. More importantly, however, is what this *does not* indicate. It does not give us specific *determinations* such that we can say that an individual has 'mercifying property x' or 'mercifying property y'.[84] This is because, as we have seen, the scope of mercy lies beyond this kind of determinations. In short, mercy is *mysterious,* known only in terms of the context in which is arises – as that which pertains to Others. *Mercy,* as a knowledge, might thus be summarised as *sight's* loving perception of its absolute horizon as it gazes upon the Other in a moral context. To recognise someone as 'right by' mercy is not to recognise some determinate thing about them, but to recognise the limitation of the determinations of justice themselves.

[83] It is probably significant here that Francis emphasizes *being evangelized* over *doing evangelization* here. Although we can play this gazing role in evangelizing others, on focusing on our role as recipients of evangelism, he leads us away from thinking of this gaze as something that we possess. This reinforces our sense of divine alterity.

[84] My use of the gerund, "mercifying" here is deliberately evocative of Francis' Papal motto, "*miserando atque eligendo*". Although some commentators translate it as "by mercifully choosing" or "by God's merciful choice" (Mercier, 2016: Online), Francis himself translates it as "*mercifying*" in order to express the way "the vision of Jesus… gives the gift of mercy" (Francis, 2016b: 12).

In this vein, the closest *MV* comes to intimating a definition of mercy is in four statements found in *MV* (§2): firstly, it is "the very mystery" of the Trinity – that is, the logic of mercy is the logic of the inner life of the Trinity. Secondly, it is "the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us" – that is, we encounter God through His establishing a relationship with us according to the register of mercy. Thirdly, it is "the fundamental law" of interpersonality – that is, it is the basic mode of relating to others. Fourthly, it "connects" God and humanity, kindling hope for divine love in spite of our sinfulness – that is, it is the mode in which we can remain within the economy of divine love despite our fallen nature. There are two salient themes here: firstly, that mercy is the logic of the economic Trinity, which is an extension of the relations of the imminent Trinity. This amounts to an explicit statement of mercy as mystery. The second is merely a restatement of the interpersonal nature of mercy, with a stubborn refusal to go 'beyond' this.

6.3. THE 'MORAL SECURITY' OF RIGHTNESS

We should pause here to anticipate an objection. Our response to this objection will set us up to respond to the challenge presented by the Cardinals.

If mercy and ethics can be seen as analogous and parallel knowledges, does this make them *alternative* knowledges? That is, does God's mercy amount to a negation or suspension of justice? If so, this amounts to antinomianism, which we might want to reject for a number of obvious reasons.

This is not the case. Francis notes that mercy does not mean that the judgments of justice are negated, writing that "anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price". Rather, it is more that judgment is not absolute, but rather is contextualised in terms of a process in time in which that judgment does not obtain throughout: it "is just the beginning of conversion, not its end" (*MV* §21). In short, judgment *obtains at a given time*. In forgiveness, the judgment of justice is not cancelled out in the present, but remains in the past as the present transcends itself into the future.

We saw previously how thematic *sight* has a quantitative horizon, mediated by time. This expands into fullness, attained in non-thematic *touch.* We might understand this temporal particularity of the range of justice in terms of the movement of this horizon. This limitation in time is a function of *touch's* excess over *sight,* wherein thematic knowledge is relative to the encounter in love within time. Love is thus revealed here as actively limiting judgment. Law is subordinate to God's love, having only a relative force.

This is not to say that love and law are in any sense opposed: Francis states explicitly that mercy and justice "are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love" (*MV* §20). That is, the exercise of both mercy and justice are both subsidiary to the exercise of God's love, and each has its own proper place within it. Rather, the limiting of law (and thus the operation of mercy, which is its complement in love) is intrinsic to the nature of law as subsidiary to love. In short, then, mercy does not represent the negation of law *as such* - the demands of law remain in place.

Another resource for understanding how the exercise of mercy is not love's acting over and against law is Francis' reflection on the relationship between mercy and divine sovereignty: Francis quotes Thomas Aquinas in saying that ""It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly this way"". He remarks that Aquinas' words "show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence" (*MV* §6; See *Summa Theologica*,[85] I, q. 30, a. 2). If mercy acted over and against law, then Francis would presumably link mercy and divine sovereignty in an antinomian sense. However, he does not: Thomas' point here is that, in exercising mercy, God occupies a position of superiority to the subject of his mercy. The limitation of law by love provides God with a resource to occupy this position, relating to us in a way that does not involve the judgments of law which condemn us. In this vein, we should not think of the excess of love over law in terms of power, but of abundance: Law has its proper place, but this is not everywhere. Mercy is the self-provision of God's love where it does not provide itself as law.[86]

[85] *Hereafter, ST*

[86] It is worth noting that "mercy" in the sense Francis uses it ultimately differs from Aquinas'. For both Aquinas and Francis, mercy is an outworking of God's love: for Francis, mercy is God's love as exercised in a register other than that of moral judgment. For Aquinas, mercy stems from pity, and God's pity derives from His love - God "loves us as belonging to Him", so that he appropriates our loss as His own (*ST* II-II, q. 30, a. 2). However, Aquinas describes mercy as a passion (II-II, q. 30, a. 3), whereas Francis discusses it primarily in terms of action – forgiving, and we have outlined it in terms of (epistemic) judgment. Moreover, Aquinas identifies pity, which grieves unjust harms, with nemesis, which grieves unjust goods, and opposes them both to envy, which grieves just goods and harms (II-II, q. 36, a. 3). In this way, for Aquinas, mercy, when properly ordered, is ordered to securing the demands of justice in the distribution of goods. As we have seen, for Francis, mercy its own order distinct from, and thus not ordered to justice – if anything, justice is ordered towards mercy, or at least mercy is only ordered towards justice to the extent that it represents the fulfilment of justice in its self-transcendence. For these reasons, the sense of "mercy" as Francis uses it might also be conveyed by "forgiveness" or "reconciliation". Of course, this can stem from "mercy" in Aquinas' sense, and does not exclude this concept.

In this vein, Oltvai notes that moral laws, for Francis, have a quasi-sacramental character: they are an "*analogia fidei*", pointing towards the love that they embody. Thus they are an expression, or a site of encounter, of God's love. And it is in their nature, as signs that conceal even as they reveal, that they must be subordinated to the transmission of that love. Because of the phenomenological nature of this process, Francis is lead to prioritise lived experience over abstract, generalised judgments. This means, in practice, that they must be approached in an "ever-contextual" way, requiring "(re)interpretation" in their application at the service of the reception of the gaze (2018: 323).[87]

In summary, for Francis, even though one may supersede the other, the relationship between mercy and justice is not one of conflict. Rather, it belongs to the nature of justice to be mediated by love in its relation to, and superseded by, mercy in this manner. Thus, when Francis highlights the story of Jesus and the adulteress (John 8:9-11) as illustrating the nature of mercy, he writes that, in this story, "God's love takes primacy over all else". In recognising this primacy, Francis writes, Christ "returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent" (*MM* §1).

However, a question remains: if justice remains intact, *why* do the judgments of justice cease to obtain between the two times? The answer is that the range of this knowledge changes. As we saw previously, for Francis, God's justice can sometimes indicate its own negation. God wills the foregoing of judgment of humanity according to His justice. Because justice entails conformity to His will, His justice thus 'judges itself' and pronounces its own foregoing with regards to humanity, thereby readjusting its range and opening up its complement in mercy as the fulfilment of its own internal logic.

This leads us on to the remaining key concept: the idea of "moral security" as a quality of the discernment of conscience, which attends to rightness. We have just argued that, for Francis, the judgments of mercy and the judgments of the moral law are in a sense parallel. Moreover, conscience is more generally associated with the moral law. Indeed, as we have seen, *Veritatis Splendor* conceives of conscience specifically as the faculty by which judgments are made in light of the moral law. As such, how is it that conscience can be said to discern mercy? And how can conscience be said to discern mercy with 'moral security'?

[87] This also shows how Francis' particularist approach to moral norms is not a nominalist one: these norms have a transcendent dimension.

Perhaps what Francis is intimating in this passage is that conscience can play a role in identifying the ranges over which 'justice' and 'mercy' obtain in a given situation. We might say that this is a kind of moral cognition, to the extent that the relative ranges of each emerge from justice's own self-limitation. That is, we become aware of the range of mercy in relation to justice when justice appraises itself as the knowledge which may or may not obtain over a given object in a given situation. As an operation of justice, conscience can repeat this appraisal and thus identify this self-limitation. To put it simply, conscience can judge when justice demands a less totalising application of law.[88]

6.4. MYSTICISM AS A GUIDE TO MORALS

This raises another question: *how* does conscience judge when justice demands a less totalising application of law? This is an important question: after all, pastors have to be able to navigate the dialectic of justice and mercy in practice, and we have not come to any determinate principles by which they can do this. Three things ought to be noted here.

Firstly, there are cases where the limits of law are indicated by its failure to secure other goods. An example of this can be found in *Evangelii Gaudium's* "kerygmatic hermeneutic" (Oltvai, 2018: 321). We noted above how *sight* is engendered by *touch,* which is experienced as becoming subject to a gaze that recognises one's own transcendence. This means that pastoral care must prioritise the communication of the kerygma, by which individuals come to experience God's loving, transforming gaze itself. To evangelise another is thus first and foremost a matter of "transmitting" this gaze, by allowing our *sight* (which, as we saw previously, is Christ's *sight*) to fall upon them in a loving manner (2018: 323). This is expressed in Francis' recognition of John Paul II's 'law of gradualness' in *AL* §295: because our capacity to follow the law is a function of our recognition of God's love as embodied in

[88] Part of the controversy over *AL* §303 relates to its application to Catholics living in 'irregular' situations - for example second marriages. This arises in the context of footnote 351, which potentially implies that they can be admitted to the Eucharist on the basis of pastoral discernment. It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to respond to this question of application, although it is worth noting that the general possibility for 'going beyond' the judgments of justice does not mean that this possibility can be actualised in all cases - and a reading of this passage as "blanket permission" is a poor one (Tom Ryan, 2017: 143). Moreover, much of the debate around this issue focuses on whether there are contexts in which (at least something framed broadly analogous to) this might be appropriate (Wahlberg, 2017: Online). This debate, however, can also take into account principles extrinsic to the relationship between justice and mercy, including the nature of the eucharist (for example, Granados (2017)), as well as the place of previous teachings about the role of merely grave rather than mortal sin as a condition for exclusion (for a debate about the place of these teachings as discipline versus metaethics, see Buttiglioni (2016), Hitchens (2016) reply, and Crosby's (2016) reply to Hitchens). It goes beyond the scope of this project to negotiate these extrinsic issues. For a more detailed discussion of the place of the wider tradition in our hermeneutic, see chapter two.

it, an individual must first come to recognise that love before they can follow the law (Oltvai, 2018: 321). These kinds of considerations can guide us in practice, even though they are not apprehensions of mercifying properties in themselves. This could very well be the kind of case that Francis imagines when he talks about moral security.

Secondly, however, we must remember that although touch is embodied in and experienced as the being-subject-to a certain kind of gaze, what is revealed *in the course of* the gazing is not reducible to the information revealed *by* the gaze itself. In this vein, Francis seems to open up the possibility for a different kind of apprehension of moral situations – one that is more primordial and mystical, going beyond the *determinations* of sight just as its (non)object exceeds them. To exhaustively account for mercy in these terms would amount to a *determination* of all the ways in which a person is *indeterminate*. Any attempt to formulate such an account would therefore be predicated on a failure to understand what it is to be mysterious in this way.

Francis articulates a suitably apophatic method of knowing in terms of "discernment", offering an extensive meditation on this topic in *Gaudete et Exsultate*.[89] In this, discernment manifests indeterminacy in two ways.

Firstly, discernment is "a grace" that seeks "to know the Father… and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ" (*GE* §170). As we have seen, it is precisely this mystical orientation that precludes reduction of the knowledge of discernment to purely thematic knowledge. Thus while it includes "existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences", as well as "reason and prudence", and "the Church's sound norms", it nevertheless "transcends them" (*GE* §170). Indeed, Francis is careful to note that while discernment takes the Gospel as its "ultimate standard", and thus necessarily involves "obedience… to the Magisterium" that guards it, he qualifies this by noting that, in practice, discernment can lead us beyond merely repeating norms: it is "not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since the same solutions are not valid in all circumstances and what was useful in one context may not prove so in another" (*GE* §173). Thus it does not reduce to them.

Secondly, discernment seeks "a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has for each of us", which Francis notes "takes shape amid so many varied situations and limitations". Here Francis also identifies an historical indeterminacy and incompleteness to

[89] Hereafter, *GE*

discernment. Similarly, as a grace, it also "requires no special abilities, nor is it only for the more intelligent or better educated". This further disrupts the link between 'expert' theorising (as a form of thematicity) and the knowledge of discernment. We might find a parallel here with the idea of "affective connaturality" – a kind of untheoretical knowledge of the divine which Francis associates with the praxis of everyday believers (see *EG* §125; Deck, 2015: 54-5), which we shall see in the next chapter bears up the possibility for indeterminacy embodied in a pluralism corresponding to the historical variations between communities of believers (*GE* §170).

Abram reads *AL* to produce an understanding of pastoral discernment which mirrors this: it involves the refusal to employ "rigid classifications" or categorisations (*AL* §298; in Abram, 2017: 148); a contextualising application of norms that takes into account wider considerations about the individual's relationship to God; and a recognition that our analyses of a pastoral situation admit complexity and ambiguity, rather than cleaving to a model of knowing which "leaves no room for confusion" or promotes "black and white" understandings (*AL* §308; in Abram, 2017: 149). Abram notes that imagination plays an important role in this process, and that Francis himself employs *ekphrasis* and a rich range of metaphors in order to express the pastoral role of the Church (see 2017: 152-158). In doing so, he seeks to communicate a multivalent understanding of the relationship between the Church and those within its care, which necessitates a similarly indeterminate, multivalent, and most of all imaginative process of discernment (2017: 158). In short, Abram notes in a less systematic way how, for Francis, discernment is a matter of negotiating the excess of pastoral situations over any particular set of determinations. This kind of reading will be familiar to anyone who has engaged in popular discourse around Francis. We will also know the popular response that, on its own, this idea seems somewhat obscure. Our 'mystical' reading provides a more substantive account of what it means to talk about this excess, and to exercise discernment with regards to it. In short, while it is not entirely explanatory (and cannot be), it at least goes some way to say *what* it is that can't be fully articulated, and why.

Finally, from a practical point of view, we already know how to navigate mystery. Indeed, the themes the four statements of *MV* §2 are present throughout the life of the Church, in its prayers and liturgies, its social teaching, and in the less formalised theological culture of its members. If there is anything unsettling or unsatisfactory about this, it is because of the frustrating nature of mystery itself. Time is greater than space, and this is a hard lesson to learn. But equally, this *opens the possibility* of life that is not governed by the *determining*

logic of space. For all its difficulty, it is also a liberating lesson – a hopeful lesson, and one that should assuage our anxieties around its refusal to console our (therefore) misplaced fears.

6.5. UNSELFING AND OBEDIENCE

This mystical moral knowledge represents a key contrast between Francis' and more paranoid theologies. In our analysis of *Veritatis Splendor* in chapter one, we explored how the encyclical 'conscripts' moral theology into the ranks: just as it belongs to the nature of the soldier to be subject to the commands of the general, for *VS,* the discipline is always-already given over to the conditions set by the magisterium. We also saw how, for John Paul II, martyrdom represents the acme of the moral life, as the total giving oneself over to the demands of the moral law. In *VS,* themes of obedience undergird the *determining* capacity of its paranoid hermeneutic, *absolutizing* its *determining* features in all their putative *totality*. It is in obedience that we recognise as *absolute* the *total* range of the moral law, and thus its capacity to *determine* situations in general.

One of the factors that makes *VS* so compelling is that, as Catholics, we perhaps expect to have to be obedient, and to be answerable to something greater than ourselves. *VS* clearly articulates what this something is: the moral law, mediated through the teachings of the magisterium. Moreover, for *VS* there is rigidity to the demands of moral life, which translates into a practical difficulty in living up to them – the moral law is *total* and *absolute,* and thus we run the risk of failing before it in all situations.

Correspondingly, Francis' appeal to a mystical dimension of ethics might appear less convincing. Indeed, from the standpoint of *VS*, Francis' appeal to mystical knowledge seems like an excuse for an *anti-martyrdom* that pits the subject against the determinations of the law by reference to a 'transcendence' that is merely a cipher for standing over and against it. This reveals what might be described as a contested 'aesthetics of obedience' as one dimension of contrast between Francis and *VS*. *VS* embodies this aesthetic in a way that Francis' metaethics does not.

However, it would be wrong to think that Francis does not also offer an obediential approach to the moral life. Moreover, the difference between Francis' required obedience and that of *VS* exhibits a key distinction that serves to make Francis' account difficult to accept for those with more paranoid sensibilities. This distinction lies in the additional, in some sense even

more difficult, requirements of a moral life that does not reduce to following a given specific set of maxims.

Abram, without giving it the more systematic connotations that we have above, picks up on Francis' use of metaphors of the "loving gaze" to describe a certain way of comporting oneself in relation to others in a pastoral context. She associates this with Iris Murdoch's concept of "unselfing", in which the subject, enraptured by an encounter with the divine, can "move beyond" its selfish, world-distorting drives to recognise moral reality (2017: 156; see Murdoch, 1997b: 369).

A key point about unselfing, for Murdoch, is that it is difficult to properly identify. This epistemic uncertainty is rooted in two conditions.

Firstly, an anthropological one: drawing from psychoanalysis, she notes that our moral decisions arise out of an "obscure" system of internal processes (1997a: 344). Thus it is difficult to discern the quality of our moral subjectivity through introspection.

Secondly, an ontological one: in order to achieve a properly unselfish gaze, we need to maintain what Murdoch refers to as "attention" to the Good (which in this context she identifies with talk about God) (1997a: 344).[90] This concept, which Murdoch borrows from Simone Weil,[91] refers to a kind of 'orientation' towards the Good which does not falsely reduce it to a *determinate* object. However, it is difficult to identify this attention from its object, precisely because doing so risks this reductive *determination*. This is because the Good is, for Murdoch, ultimately *indeterminate.* For Murdoch, we have access to "intuitions" of the Good in its *determinate* instantiations, through which we can ascend to ever more truthful apprehensions of the Good in itself. However, precisely because they are instantiations, these never quite bring us to the concept of Good itself (1997b: 378). This lack of *determination* results in a lack of *totality* with regards to the moral life: we are ultimately left in a world that "remains disparate and complex, beyond the hopes of any system", possessing only the "shadowy, unachieved unity" that comes from its pointing beyond itself (1997b: 380).[92] In this context, any particular intuition which purports to be of the Good in

[90] Note here the parallels with Francis' exhortation to "serene attentiveness" to creation and God (*Laudato Si'* §226). This reveals the mystical nature of creation, and thereby "opens one to transformed relationships with God, oneself, others, and the natural world" (Ehrman, 2018: 105). We will return to this, and the implied parallel between the mystical encounter with the Other and the apprehension of the created world in our sixth chapter.

[91] *C.f.* Weil (2002: 116-122)

[92] For a more complete discussion of this, see Murdoch (1992: 391-430).

itself/God is a false reduction from unpossessable transcendent principle to immanent (and therefore possessable) intuition, which Murdoch calls "fantasy" (1997a: 354). This in turn means that we cannot identify attention from the supposed 'presence' of its object: the moment we say "my attention is on the Good", we give the lie to our own statement, reducing the Good by *determination* to whatever intuition is intended by the sentence.

These two conditions mean that, if unselfing is the necessary condition for a certain kind of ethical knowledge *in situ*, this knowledge lacks easily identifiable conditions. Furthermore, Murdoch is keenly aware of the difficulty of unselfishness. She notes how experience teaches us that the attempt to "pierce the veil of selfish consciousness" "cannot be entirely successful" (1997b: 377). This leads her to an Augustinian awareness of the ease with which we slip into concupiscent fantasy,[93] which she illustrates dramatically in her novels.[94]

Francis' faith in the capacity of the Church for pastoral discernment implies a mitigated suspicion on this front. Indeed, in the next chapter, we will see how Francis explicitly approves of non-theorised theologies in the form of popular piety, and employs an epistemology of *affective connaturality* to provide an account of the *sensus fidei* which enables him to approach discernment hopefully. Our sixth chapter will show how this optimism can be accounted for in light of his eschatological convictions.

Nevertheless, there are elements of Murdoch's vision which remain: it is hard to totally deny Murdoch's anthropological condition. Moreover, while we might not wish to subscribe to the model of Platonism offered by Murdoch, the ontological condition is reproduced by virtue of the fact that, for Francis, mystical ethical knowledge is similarly rooted in an apprehension of that which by its very nature defies *determination* (the transcendence of the Other). Finally, Augustinian concerns about concupiscence are hardly alien to Catholicism![95]

Combined with the fact that this mystical knowledge can qualify our determinate knowledge, Francis' ethical mysticism requires us to adopt a certain hesitancy in making ethical claims. We ought not to confuse this with Vattimo's ethic of 'weak thought' – this is not the hesitancy that comes with secular, 'post-metaphysical' discourse (and as we shall see in chapter six,

[93] Insole reads this awareness as pessimistic to the extent that it is better described as "neo-Lutheran" (2006: 125).
[94] See *The Black Prince* (1973) in particular (Insole, 2006: 134).
[95] We will return to this in our conclusion.

there is a strong metaphysical strand to Francis' thought).[96] Rather, it is an awareness that ethics involves a difficult discipline, which, despite its difficulty, can nevertheless always challenge and surprise us. Francis' ethical mysticism both baptises the *possibility* for a challenge to totality rooted in discernment, and with the same stroke casts doubt on any *particular* such challenge.

This entails a model of an 'obediential' moral life, albeit different to that of *VS.* For *VS,* the acme of the moral life is martyrdom, conceived as the radical surrender of oneself to the *prescriptions of the moral law*, and a refusal to set one's power as an *agent* over against it. For Francis, in contrast, the acme of the moral life is the radical surrender of oneself to the *transcendence of both divine and human Others*, and a refusal to set one's power as a *knower* over and against it. That is to say, for Francis, we must respect the absolute horizon of our knowledge. In this vein, Francis condemns the "self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism" of those who reduce salvation to a function of following a set of worldly rules, and occupying certain worldly categories (*EG* 94). In doing so, they forget the role of mercy in salvation. In the context of the understanding of mercy developed above, we can recognise this as a condemnation of those who neglect the transcendence of Others, and the functions thereof in the moral life. The term "promethean" rings with particular significance here: it is literally a defiance of the transcendent (in the form of the *indeterminate* Other), giving to ourselves a power (to *determine*) that does not belong to us. The refusal of neopelagianism is a refusal of self-aggrandizement in the form of the illusion of self-sufficient *totality*; of the fantasy of a moral life reduced to the function of a *determinate* set of rules.

This principle is powerfully illustrated in *MM:* Francis notes that Jesus' response to the adulteress' accusers in John 8:10-11 is silence; silence to "let God's voice be heard in the consciences [sic] not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers" (*MM* §1). This reading of the story links themes of unselfing with mystical knowledge of God: when we cease to impose ourselves and our knowledge upon the situation (in speaking, particularly to condemn), God's voice comes through. However, God's voice here does not break the silence. We might interpret this image of a 'silent voice' as reflecting the apophatic dimension of Francis' ethical mysticism: the knowledge gained through the encounter with this voice (with God as a person) is not just another articulation of the law by which the

[96] For a treatment of this issue in relation to Francis, see Lemna (2014).

crowd had condemned the woman. Rather, it lies in excess of the determinations of that law, and thus appears as 'nothing' where those determinations are totalised.

This is unacceptable to the paranoid sensibility. Paranoia, as a theory of negative affect, is perfectly content with ethics being hard in the sense of being hard to live up to, and often failed. What it cannot abide is ethics being hard in the sense of that we might be wrong in ways we cannot anticipate – that is, of an *indeterminacy* that opens the possibility of bad surprises. But this also touches a nerve theologically: a challenge to authority is a challenge to the eschatological claim that underpins that claim to authority, as well as perhaps a claim to unity beneath that authority (that is, in obedience). We noted earlier that *VS* seeks to preserve these elements: as to the first, it seeks to secure a determinate account of the fulfilment to come by providing the Church with a sign of this in its possession of moral knowledge in the present. In contrast, as Hauerwas (1996) notes, Murdoch's model of the moral life, comprised by a consistent refusal of *totality,* and without the promise of a resolution, leads to a hopeless eschatology. As to the second, *VS* links Christian identity to a clear form of life, embodied in the moral law.

We will deal with the first of these in chapter seven, which will show that Francis, in contrast to Murdoch, proceeds from the basis of an eschatology which transforms the failure of indeterminacy into a sacrament of hope. This in turn allows him to transform the negativity which is so intolerable to paranoia into a source of positive affect, thereby motivating a reparative approach. As for the moment, we will deal with the second in the next chapter, which shows how Francis provides an account of the Church as an authentic unity that is nevertheless an *indeterminate* one.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, we read *LF* as outlining a phenomenology of faith-knowledge. We also saw how an epistemology that permits a reparative stance towards *indeterminacy* in faith-knowledge emerges from this:

Faith-knowledge arises in both a thematic and an unthematic, or pre-thematic way. We enter into this knowledge through a primordial encounter with God, experienced as the *touch* of divine love in the loving gaze. In being touched, we touch back - and this instils in us an unthematic knowledge of the Other whom we touch, which in turn is the condition for our own adoption of a subjectivity characterised by this loving gaze – Christ's. This gaze gives

over to us thematically what has already encountered primordially. However, it is also the means of lovingly touching Others, and God's lovingly touching those Others through us.

Because of this dependence, the thematic component of faith-knowledge is characterised by two horizons. Firstly, a qualitative horizon that figures the transcendence of both divine and human Others, conceived as an excess over the possible content of thematic knowledge. This means that our faith-knowledge is characterised by both *non-totality,* corresponding to the inexhaustibility of the transcendent Other: we will never fully circumscribe through description what it is to be touched by the Other, or their love. This excess also means that the content of our faith knowledge will always exceed the determinations of any particular set of thematised principles, which themselves are always mediated by their unthematized ground. Secondly, as we persist in the loving embrace of the divine gaze, our knowledge of the world revealed in love expands, pushing back the quantitative horizons of our faith-knowledge. This means that our faith-knowledge is characterised by *indeterminacy,* corresponding to the *indeterminacy* of the plenitude that lies within that transcendence, and which flows out before us in the course of history.

We also saw how the qualitative horizon of our thematic knowledge is illustrated particularly clearly in the case of our moral knowledge, where we realise that a truly loving gaze is one that recognises the existence of this excess, and in pastoral practice, which is necessarily flexible, particular, and unsystematic. In this context, we must develop a mystical attunement to this excess, and its mediation of thematicity. This involves an ascetic 'unselfing', wherein we learn not to assert our own capacity as knowers over and against the transcendence of the Other.[97]

However, this relation of thematicity to mediating unthematic mystical knowledge is not restricted in Francis' theology to ethics. The next chapter will look to how Francis builds from this to an ecclesiology – that is, how faith-knowledge serves as the material for a collective Christian subjectivity, out of which practice, culture, and identity emerge. We noted how *VS* links Catholic identity in faith to the actualisation of the *determinations* of the moral law, as mediated by the specific historical teachings of the Magisterium, in a form of life. This establishes a notion of unity as the criterion for Catholic identity – a notion of unity beneath the *determinations* of that law, with the boundaries of that unity indicated by the *totalisation*

[97] Illuminating parallels can be found in Wallenfang's engagement with texts outside our selection in order to produce a phenomenological reading of Francis that mirrors a number of features of ours. Note in particular his identification of mercy with an "unpredictable encounter" to which those involved must "yield" (2018: 66).

of those determinations. In contrast, as we shall see, Francis' more reparative vision of faith-knowledge leads to a correspondingly less *determined* understanding of what it means to come together in a unity of faith.

In the mean-time, and pending a more in-depth discussion in the next chapters, we might conclude with a comment on the affective dimension of Francis' understanding of faith-knowledge. We have talked a lot about the 'limits' of knowledge, and the difficulties involved in navigating these limits. From this, we might think that Francis' epistemology in *LF* ultimately sets us up for a negative-affective stance – that we, as knowers, are ultimately destined to disappointment. However, we can subtly shift the emphasis.

Instead of fixating on the limits of thematicity, we might note the possibility for knowledge *beyond* those limits, in *touch*. We might also note that, beyond these limits, lies *fullness* – that we stand before a God who so exceeds description, and yet who touches us lovingly. Similarly, we live in a world alongside countless Others, each recognisable as unfathomably deep wellsprings of newness – Others whom we can love, and who can love us. Others with whom an encounter is the very touch of grace, and for whom we ourselves are (*you* are!) a blessing.

Orienting ourselves in this way allows us to grasp the sensibility underlying Francis' theology. These realisations cast a light upon the world in which it appears mysterious, but wonderful therein. A light which searches out the shadows of uncertainty, and recasts their threatening darkness as the negative face of a hopeful promise. In short, a light for a reparative vision.

IV. MYSTICAL ECCLESIOLOGY AND HISTORICAL PLURALISM

In our introduction, we noted that *Veritatis Splendor* reproduces a paranoid paradigm in Catholic theology. For *VS,* the unity of Christian life is a function of the *totality* of Magisterial *determinations.* In short, it is a *determinate* unity. This in turn invites the negation of alterity: what exists beyond the bounds of these *determinations* becomes 'un-Christian' (or at least, un-Catholic). In the previous chapter, we read Francis as rooting faith in a mystical encounter with God. In this chapter, we will read Francis' ecclesiology as prioritising mystical encounter over juridical structures.[98] We will argue that this leads him to prioritise the possibility of encounter over the inclusion or exclusion of particular forms within the Church. This in turn enables him to incorporate variations in form into the unity of the Church.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the nature of the Church in *Lumen Fidei* read in dialogue with *Evangelii Gaudium.* We will show how, for Francis, the Church is a collective subject founded on the shared encounter with the divine identified in the previous chapter. This leads Francis to an ecclesial 'Marian priority', wherein the institutional 'Petrine' structures of the Church are ordered to this encounter, and consequently can only function antecedent to it.[99]

Next, we will look at how this leads to pluralism within the Church. We will begin by looking to how historical pluralism leads to pluralism of encounter. We will argue, following Francis' theology of language as outlined in the Apostolic Letter, *Magnum Principium,*[100] that the forms within the Church (including doctrinal formulations) must be ordered towards facilitating this encounter, and thus admit this pluralism. This establishes a "plurivocal" understanding of Church unity, admitting difference within itself. We will conclude by looking to how Francis' ecclesiology encourages a positive-affective response to difference within the Church, and the *indeterminacy* that this represents.

1. THE MARIAN CHURCH

In the last chapter, we saw how Francis' mysticism gives priority to the unthematic knowledge of *touch* over the thematic knowledge of *sight.* This model relativizes thematic

[98] For a discussion of our 'reader-centered' hermeneutic, see chapter two.
[99] Note that I am deploying these terms in order to track a distinction in ecclesiology to which they have already been attached, rather than to make any substantive points about topics such as Mariology – or the worrying gender politics latent within these associations.
[100] Hereafter, *MP*

knowledge to an unthematic knowledge that exceeds its *determinations.* This excess establishes two 'horizons' to *sight,* expressed via the metaphor of *hearing,* which in turn represent the *indeterminacy* and non-*totality* of thematic knowledge. Francis performs something similar with his ecclesiology. We shall argue below that he builds from this epistemology to order the 'Petrine' juridical structures of the Church towards the mystical 'Marian' encounter with the divine, subjecting them to the *indeterminacy,* non-*totality,* and non-*absoluteness* that conditions any expression of this encounter.

1.1. A COMMUNAL SUBJECTIVITY

We saw in our last chapter how, for Francis, Christian subjectivity is the communal participation in that of Christ. We also saw how Christian subjectivity cannot be reduced solely to a set of thematic beliefs, which themselves arise reflectively from a process of negotiating an interpersonal encounter with God. This includes both an unthematic way of 'knowing' in *touch*, but also the concrete act of 'touching' itself. Finally, we saw that, for its human participants, this relationship is ultimately a response to revelation.

In this vein, Francis understands the communal dimension of Christian subjectivity as revolving around the *sharing* of revelation. Francis describes revelation as a "gift", which, once accepted, moves naturally on to its sharing: "The word, once accepted, becomes a response… which spreads to others and invites them to believe". We see through the transmission of that knowledge by others, and those who do not have knowledge acquire it from those who do, "just as one candle is lighted from another" (*LF* §37).

The Church is the community in which this transmission occurs. This makes the continuity of the Church's tradition through history the condition for the possibility of faith-knowledge at times other than that of the initial revelation: Francis writes that it is "through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus". Moreover, we saw previously how Christian subjectivity is ultimately a matter of participating in that of Christ. This makes the community in which this subjectivity is reproduced coextensive with the subjectivity itself. Hence he describes the community of witnesses that is the Church as "that one remembering subject" (*LF* §38).

1.2. INSTITUTIONS AND MYSTERY

In short, the Church, as collective subject, arises as such antecedent to the encounter with God identified in the last chapter. This means that, for Francis, the various institutions which serve the Church are ultimately ordered towards this mystical dimension. This is illustrated

most clearly in his vision for a "missionary option" for the Church, his conception of ecclesial *memory,* and his mystical ontology of Church unity.

1.2.1. MISSIONARY OPTION

In *EG,* Francis outlines his vision for a "missionary option", or "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything", so that every aspect of the Church's institutional and cultural life "can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world". This includes a "renewal of structures" (*EG* §27), which are thus placed at the service of evangelization.

Worthen notes that "evangelization" has a specific meaning not reducible to "evangelism" (2018: 81). Whereas the latter means "Christians telling other people about the Gospel", "evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (*Evangelii nuntiandi,* §18; in Worthen, 2016: 81). This transformative focus links Francis' "missionary option" closely with the transformative 'touching of hearts' identified in the previous chapter specifically as part of the encounter with God. In other words, central to Francis' "missionary option" is a recognition that the institutions of the Church exist (or ought to exist) at the service of the encounter with God.

1.2.2. MEMORY

In a similar vein, Francis conceives of institutions within the Church in terms of reproducing Christian subjectivity. Central to this is what Francis calls *memory*. He writes:

> **...what is communicated in the Church, what is handed down in her living Tradition, is the new light born of an encounter with the true God… which touches us at the core of our being and engages our minds, wills and emotions, opening us to relationships lived in communion.**
>
> (*LF* §40)

Francis distinguishes memory from "a purely doctrinal content", which could be adequately transmitted in "an idea... or perhaps a book, or the repetition of a spoken message" (*LF* §40). That is, 'remembrance' in the sense of the Church's memory is not the mere re-presentation of facts or propositions. Rather, it is the repetition in the present of the encounter with God from which faith-knowledge arises. Francis notes that "[b]ecause faith is born of an encounter which takes place in history and lights up our journey through time, it must be passed on in every age. It is through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus" (*LF* §38). Here Francis unites three themes: firstly, of the foundation of faith in

an encounter with God, which we saw earlier. Secondly, the idea that faith is passed on through 'witness'. Thirdly, that what witness passes on more specifically is not merely faith, but the occasion for the encounter itself from which faith arises. This occasion, more specifically, is Christ's Passion: "Faith's past, that act of Jesus' love which brought new life to the world, comes down to us through the memory of others — witnesses — and is kept alive in that one remembering subject which is the Church" (*LF* §38).

Note here that Francis explicitly reminds us of the relationship between the Passion and God's love. We saw in our last chapter how the encounter that lies at the heart of faith revolves around an economy of love, in which we are *touched* by divine love, and *touch* back in our own way. In other words, in 'remembering' Christ's passion, we are *touched* by God's love. Hence it serves as an occasion for the encounter from which faith springs. Thus Francis strongly affirms the importance of the Church, as a community of witnesses to faith: it is precisely through receiving this memory through the witness of others that we come to faith. In this vein, he writes that "[t]he love which is the Holy Spirit and which dwells in the Church unites every age and makes us contemporaries of Jesus" (*LF* §38). We encounter Jesus as members of the Church, drawn in by the love that unites it as a communion in which memory is shared.

The institutions of the Church preserve this memory. Francis illustrates this function in his analysis of "four elements which comprise the storehouse of memory which the Church hands down: the profession of faith, the celebration of the sacraments, the path of the ten commandments, and prayer" (*LF* §46).

The sacraments are the first 'storehouse' identified by Francis. He focuses here on baptism and the Eucharist. For Francis, Baptism transmits to us "both a teaching to be professed and a specific way of life which demands the engagement of the whole person and sets us on a path to goodness". In this way, the baptised are "set in a new context" (*LF* §41). This 'teaching to be professed' recalls the process of thematising knowledge bounded by the conditions expressed as *hearing*, and the 'way of life' recalls the transmission of knowledge as seeing: the first witnesses by 'profession', or speech; the other by visible action and ordering of the world and activity within it. In this way, the baptised adopt a subjectivity that finds itself in the "new environment" (*LF* §41) of a world oriented thematically in relationship to God.

However, as we saw previously, the condition for the possibility of thematic faith-knowledge is *touch*. In line with this, Francis, also writes that, in baptism, "we become a new creation

and God's adopted children" (*LF* §41). We saw previously how the theme of God's fatherhood, here invoked in the sense of our childhood, relates to His *relation* to us on a primordial level. We might thus read this as referring to our acquiring a new primordial relationship to God in 'touch', which serves as the condition for thematic knowledge. Similarly, we also noted the possibility of reading our 'being' as relating to our subjectivity. In this way, if we read our becoming a 'new creation' in the sense of having a 'change of being', we might again understand this in terms of the fundamental transformation of our subjectivity elicited by touch.[101]

What is particularly significant about baptism is that it "is something which must be received by entering into the ecclesial communion which transmits God's gift" (*LF* §41). That is, it is inseparable from initiation into the Church as an historical community, and thus the process by which that community is sustained in history. The ritual aspects of the ceremony thus embody the essential life of the community. Insofar as this community is formed around a theophanic encounter that fundamentally reconfigures our subjectivity, the imagery of the sacrament in which this first occurs reflects this reconfiguration. For example, the immersion in water simultaneously signifies both death and life, thereby inviting us to "pass through self-conversion to a new and greater identity" and to be "reborn by following Christ in his new life", and communicating "the incarnational structure of faith" by both referring to fundamental and radical transformation, as well as the bodily nature of the process (*LF* §42).

With regards to the Eucharist, Francis writes that this sacrament is that in which "[t]he sacramental character of faith finds its highest expression". As we saw previously, Christian subjectivity is a matter of encounter and sharing in the subjectivity of Christ. In this vein, Francis writes, the Eucharist constitutes "an encounter with Christ truly present in the supreme act of his love". In this encounter, we receive God's revelation in both its forms, as both call and promise, future and memory (*LF* §44).

This is received in two dimensions: "history", and that "which leads from the visible world to the invisible". In the dimension of history, "the Eucharist is an act of remembrance, a making present of the mystery in which the past... demonstrates its ability to open up a future, to foreshadow ultimate fulfilment" (*LF* §44). That is, we sacramentally encounter Christ's incarnation and passion, which, as we saw earlier, Francis describes as God's "eternal" word, the "definitive yes" to his promises, and the "supreme manifestation of His love for us" (love

[101] As we noted previously, this does not mean that we cannot have 'touch' without Baptism – merely that it transmits a memory of 'touch' that provides us with privileged knowledge in this register.

being identified with revelation) (*LF* §12). In the dimension relating the visible and invisible worlds, we encounter and are entered into the economy of grace: "The bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, who becomes present in his Passover to the Father: this movement draws us, body and soul, into the movement of all creation toward its fulfilment in God" (*LF* §44). That is, we encounter Christ, whose subjectivity we adopt, and move towards God in the love that constitutes that subjectivity.

The second 'storehouse' is the Apostle's Creed. The Creed, for Francis, is not merely a dogmatic formula. Francis writes that "[t]he creed does not only involve giving one's assent to a body of abstract truths; rather, when it is recited the whole of life is drawn into a journey towards full communion with the living God". That is, its recitation serves as a site of encounter with God. This in turn gives rise to thematic knowledge, within the economy of love: when we recite the creed, we are "invited to enter into the mystery" it professes. This involves "becoming part of that history of life which embraces us and expands our being, making it part of... the ultimate subject which recites the creed, namely, the Church" (*LF* §45). In effect, we might say, recitation of the Creeds constitutes a microcosm of the essential elements of the Christian life.

The third 'storehouse' is the Lord's Prayer. Francis writes that, in the Lord's Prayer, "Christians learn to share in Christ's own spiritual experience and to see all things through his eyes" (*LF* §46). That is, in reciting the Lord's prayer, we are able to participate in Christ's 'sight'. What is significant here is Francis' description of the result as 'participation' in Christ's sight, 'through his eyes'. In the context of his understanding of Christian subjectivity, we must understand this in terms of the encounter from which this knowledge is possible – that is, the Lord's Prayer is a way of *touching* God, or a site of encounter.

The fourth 'storehouse' is the Decalogue. Francis describes the Decalogue as a set of "concrete directions for emerging from the desert of the selfish and self-enclosed ego in order to enter into dialogue with God". In this way, the Decalogue describes "the response of love" to God's call, by which we return to him (*LF* §46). This is redolent of Buber when he asserts that, in order to enter into *relation* with God, we must surrender "that false self-asserting instinct that makes a man flee to the possessing of things" (2013: 3.3). We might say that, for Francis, the decalogue outlines how to enter into the economy of love with God. The Decalogue is thus not so much a site of encounter, but a *technique* – to put it simply, the decalogue indicates 'how to' *touch.*

We might understand Francis' concept of a 'storehouse' of memory as analogous to Buber's concept of *form*.[102] As we saw in the last chapter, for Buber, *form* is an *It* which serves as a site of 'theophany', or encounter with *Thou.* For Francis, the 'memory' of the church is the forms which it preserves throughout history that serve as the *forms* (in Buber's sense) through which its members can encounter God;[103] material elements through which we can enter into the economy of love in *touch.*[104]

1.2.3. UNITY

Thirdly, Francis roots the unity of the Church in a mystical reality. For Francis, "[t]he unity of the Church in time and space is linked to the unity of the faith" (*LF* §40) – that is, of its subjectivity. The unity of the Church as a collective subject *consists* in two functions of two ontological relationships.

Firstly, of the unity of its object – the Church is united "because of the oneness of the God who is known and confessed". That is, the faith-knowledge of all Christians arises from and pertains to the same object (*LF* §47). Availing ourselves of Scholastic terminology, we might say that it has the same efficient and final cause: it arises from the same *relation*, and is directed towards knowing the same object.

Secondly, although the faith of the Church may manifest different forms within it, all of these forms are unified under a single type: all faith "is directed to the one Lord", and arises from and is ordered to "the life of Jesus... the concrete history which he shares with us". Francis contrasts this with Gnosticism, which maintains that there are two faiths – a perfect one, which can transcend Christ's historicity "toward the mysteries of unknown divinity"; and an imperfect one, which cannot. In other words, Christianity is a single vocation and a single knowledge (*LF* §47) - we might say that it has a shared formal cause, or that it is the same 'material'.

In short, the unity of the Christian subject derives from its efficient, formal, and final unity. In this vein, the unity of the faith itself *subsists* as a function of the unity of the subject in

[102] We will identify this more specific use of the term via italicisation.

[103] Note that we ought not to conflate 'storehouse' with 'only point of reception': although they have a unique institutional role, the faith is also transmitted by believers outside of these specific contexts. Likewise, chapter six will show how, according to *Laudato Si',* all of creation can serve as a site of theophany – although the sacraments remain a "privileged" occasion for this (§235).

[104] This point also serves to reinforce the historical dimension of the metaphor of 'touch'. The sacraments serve as the site of this encounter *through* their empirical dimensions; we 'touch' God when we touch the oil, hear the words, smell the incense, see the candles etc.

which it is realised: “faith is one because it is shared by the whole Church, which is one body and one Spirit”. That is, faith is unified because it belongs to a single subject (*LF* §47).

1.3. Marian Priority

What is significant here is that Francis’ conception of ecclesial unity in *LF* is ultimately not a juridical one. Rather, the unity of the Church is a function of the fundamentally mystical unity of its faith. This in turn means that the structures and forms which make this unity visible and demarcate its boundaries only do so antecedent to a fundamentally mystical dimension.

This prioritisation of the mystical over the institutional forms of the Church has implications for the way in which we construe the role of those institutions. These implications were explored by Vatican II.

Lumen Gentium[105] describes the Church as a sacrament, through which humanity communes with God. In this, it is structured and guided by the Holy Spirit (*LG* §4). Its constitution thus derives from the people who belong to it through the Holy Spirit: it is “the people of God” (*LG* §9). Curran argues that, in this, “Vatican II... sees the hierarchy within its fundamental understanding of the church as mystery and as the people of God”. In this vein, *LG* attends first to the Church as mystery, then as the people of God, and only then to the hierarchy. Similarly, chapter four of part one of *Gaudium et Spes* emphasises the nature of the Church as the people of God, and this emphasis is continued in “subsequent documents” (Curran, 2002: 103).

Odozor notes that this departs from pre-Vatican II understandings of the Church, which tended to represent it in terms reminiscent of a neo-Platonic hierarchy, with the Church being ‘more properly’ the Church as one ascended up the institutional hierarchy. In contrast, the Church presented in *Lumen Gentium* is more “concentric” than hierarchical, with Christ at the centre and no difference in ‘vertical’ relation to him corresponding to juridical hierarchy between its members (2003: 22). We might say, following von Balthasar (1986), that the Council prioritised the *Marian* principals within the Church over the *Petrine,* its hierarchical (Petrine) elements being grounded in and oriented towards the (Marian) reception of the mystical and sacramental.[106]

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[105] Hereafter, *LG*

[106] Of course, von Balthasar affirmed a more authoritarian vision of the relationship between these principles than we do here, which construes authority in the Church along the model of a hierarchical patriarchal marriage. Beattie critiques this gendered dimension as “rigid masculine authoritarianism” (2006: 135), the imagery of which turns on the negation of women’s personhood and correspondingly

Paralleling *Gaudium et Spes'* identification of the Church with 'the people of God', we noted that, for Francis, the Church is founded upon a sacramental encounter with God. The Church is the community which participates in this encounter, and preserves the forms which serve as its means within history. As a corollary, he writes that

> **it can also be said that faith itself possesses a sacramental structure. The awakening of faith is linked to the dawning of a new sacramental sense in our lives… in which visible and material realities are seen to point beyond themselves to the mystery of the eternal.**

(*LF* §40)

That is, just as the sacraments are the sites of the encounter which engenders faith, faith itself can be understood as sacramental in the sense of its alerting us to the presence of God in these sites. In Buber's terms, it is faith which enables us to apprehend form *as* form. This renders faith *itself* a form, as the visible outworking of encounter in history. This repeats a core theme of *Lumen Gentium,* wherein the Church is affirmed as the "universal sacrament of salvation" (*LG* §48).

Likewise, Francis makes frequent use of the term "people of God". For example, *LF* associates the memory and continuity of witness of the Church with this identity when he quotes *Dei verbum* §8 to write that "[w]hat was handed down by the apostles… "comprises everything that serves to make the people of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church… perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes"" (*LF* §40). In this vein, *EG* liberally uses this term, as well as making this identity a prominent theme in its own right. Here, Francis associates it with the Church's fundamental nature and mission, writing that "[b]eing Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity" (*EG* §114). He gives this an explicitly mystical connotation when he continues to write that it is the Holy Spirit which "builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God" (*EG* §117), and through its "constant inner working" ensures that "the people of God… is constantly evangelizing itself" (*EG* §139). He also identifies the sacramental basis of the Church as people of God in baptism, by virtue of which "[t]he people of God is holy" (*EG* §119); and "all the members of the People of God have become

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invites "uncritical fidelity" to its Petrine teaching bodies (2006: 138). However, as noted previously, our purpose here is not to interrogate or critique the gendered dimension of these images, although this is not to say that it is not worth doing in general. Nor is it to interpret von Balthasar.

missionary disciples" (*EG* §120). Commentators such as Kasper also identify wider themes associated with the People of God theology in Francis' wider teachings – for example, his emphasis on the role of the *sensus fidei* as articulated in *Lumen Gentium* (§12), in *Evangelii Gaudium* (§119, 139, 198) (2015: 39). We might thus say that, for Francis as for the Council, the essential principle upon which the identity of the Church is founded is both its constitution by, and provision of, sacramental economy.

The Council's shift towards Marian priority was accompanied by a shift in the Church's understanding of its juridical structures, particularly with regards to authority. Curran argues that although *Lumen Gentium* "strongly upholds the authoritative teaching office of the hierarchical magisterium", it also affirms that all baptised people are able to play a prophetic and teaching role. He associates this identification with an ethos visible in the other documents of the Council: *Dignitatis Humanae* grounds itself in the "spiritual aspirations" arising out of an increased consciousness of "the dignity of the human person" on the part of the laity (§1). Perhaps most strikingly indicative of the wider implications of this understanding, Curran notes that this is a clear, revolutionary admission that the Church "has learned from the experience of human beings" (Curran, 2002: 105). That is, the juridical authority of the Magisterium is not impervious to challenge from other voices within the Church. Nor, according to Curran, is it impervious to voices from the outside: *Gaudium et Spes* "describes the teaching function of the church with regards to the social world in terms of dialogue" (Curran, 2002: 105). This means that the Church does not merely present teachings, but also "receives help" and has actually "learned moral truth" from the modern world. Curran quotes §44 of the document in support of this, which states that "[t]hanks to the experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, the nature of human beings is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened" (in Curran, 2002: 105-6). Finally, he claims that *Justice in the World,* the 1971 document produced by the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, similarly endorses dialogical notions of the hierarchical function, insofar as it "insists on the need for dialogue to bring about true peace and justice in the world" (Curran, 2002: 106).

As we shall see, Francis' Marian priority enables him to similarly adopt a less *totalising* and *determining* approach to the formal elements of Church life. This enables him to permit plurivocal, decentred authority, and plurality of forms within the life of faith, which in turn provides the means to articulate diversity within the unified subjectivity of the Church, and the *indeterminacy* this represents.

2. PLURALISM

2.1. HISTORICAL PLURALISM

Francis' Marian prioritisation of encounter situates the reproduction of Christian subjectivity within the life of the community as it lives out this encounter. Following the development highlighted by Odozor, this means that we cannot conceive of the process as a unilateral, top-down affair mediated by the figure of a juridical superior. Rather, it takes place 'on the ground', at the level of the individual who encounters God for themselves. This lays the ground for diversity within that unity.

Francis writes that, although Christian subjectivity is a matter of participating in the subjectivity of Christ, the love that constitutes Christian subjectivity is "not only a relationship between the Father and the Son". If it was, Christian subjectivity would solely be a matter of participating in Christ's subjectivity as a unity, which would make this subjectivity a matter of *relation* between God and a single unified, homogenous subject. However, the fact is that there are multiple individuals as local operators of this collective subjectivity, which circulates between them. As such, there is also a relationship "in the Spirit, a "We," a communion of persons" (*LF* §39). In other words, individuals can subsist as individuals in the collective subjectivity of the Church because of the economy of the Spirit.[107] In short, Christianity may be a collective subjectivity, but it has individual operators in local contexts.

This tension between the unified collective subjectivity, on the one hand, and individual local operators on the other, bears out an analogy with the tension between speaking communities and individual linguistic operators. Francis draws this analogy with regards to the reproduction of each kind of subject. He writes:

> **Language itself… by which we make sense of our lives and the world around us, comes to us from others, preserved in the living memory of others. Self-knowledge is only possible when we share in a greater memory. The same thing holds true for faith, which brings human understanding to its fullness.... The Church is a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith.**
>
> (*LF* §38)

In other words, our identity arises as a function of a language. This identity is only intelligible to us if we speak the language – that is, if we participate in the life of the linguistic

[107] This is, admittedly, not particularly illuminating pneumatologically. However, this is not Francis' focus here.

community. Thus it is only by participating in the life of the linguistic community that we can make this identity intelligible to ourselves. Whereas linguistic communities are formed around speaking practices, the Church is formed around a sustained encounter with God. Similarly, just as the knowledge of linguistic communities is a function of those speaking practices, the knowledge of the Church – that is, faith-knowledge – is a function of this encounter. It is by participating in the life of the Church that we can come to possess this knowledge, and the world becomes intelligible to us in its light. In this way, Christian subjectivity becomes a function of the historical life of a community.

This historicisation of the relationship between the collective subject and the individual operator connects the diversity of individual operators within the collective subjectivity with the diversity of individuals within historical communities. That is, one way in which we can conceive of pluralism within the Christian subject is in terms of the local variations within historical subjectivities, arising as a function of the various historical distinctions that give rise to these variations. Francis himself reflects upon this, suitably specifically in the context of linguistic differences, in his Apostolic Letter, *Magnum Principium* (2017).

2.2. MAGNUM PRINCIPIUM

2.2.1. LITURGICAL LANGUAGE AS THEOPHANIC

Magnum Principium makes an amendment to Canon 838, affording the power to prepare vernacular translations of liturgical texts to local Episcopal Conferences. A close reading of the document reveals a theology of liturgical language that articulates the relationship between theophany and possible variation in the forms via which this encounter occurs. In doing so, it establishes the possibility for variation in the thematic content of faith-knowledge arising from the unified encounter in which Christian subjectivity is constituted.

At the heart of the theology of *Magnum Principium* is the assertion that

> **Because the liturgical text is a ritual sign it is a means of oral communication. However, for the believers who celebrate the sacred rites the word is also a mystery.**

Francis here identifies two dimensions to liturgical language. The first is the immanent dimension of "oral communication". This is then juxtaposed against a transcendent second dimension – liturgical language as a "mystery".[108] This second dimension also implies a quasi-

[108] Perhaps questionably, *MP* fails to indicate a semiotics that would explain what is happening in this 'communication', although Francis' use of intensional over representational language in *LF* might lead us to suppose the former. Either way, the key distinction for our project is between the transcendent and immanent aspects of mystery and communication respectively, and this is not a semiotic issue.

sacramental economy involved in liturgical language *use*, wherein the speaking itself serves to present the mystery.

Francis then continues:

> **when words are uttered, in particular when the Sacred Scriptures are read, God speaks to us. In the Gospel Christ himself speaks to his people who respond either themselves or through the celebrant by prayer to the Lord in the Holy Spirit.**

This explicitly identifies this quasi-sacramental economy as a theophanic one: the priest, in his speaking the words of the liturgy, serves as the medium for divine self-communication; the mystery is God as person. The theology of liturgical language which comes into view here is further brought into contact with the model of theological knowledge presented in *Lumen Fidei* when we remember that the various 'storehouses' of the memory of the Church are accessed in and through the liturgy. For example, the Liturgy of the Word contains the recitation of the Creed (see *LF* §40). We might say that, for Francis, liturgical language constitutes another 'storehouse' in itself, serving as the form via which theophany occurs, and encounter is made.

Furthermore, Francis describes "the word" itself as "a mystery". This claim implies that the liturgical word *itself* constitutes the kind of divine reality encountered in the sacramental self-communication of theophany. This also implies that there is more to the words themselves than just forms in which theophany occurs.

This motivates the document's concern for fidelity in translation, understood in terms of successful 'communication'. *MP* identifies a tension between, on the one hand, the necessity of translation of the liturgy into the local vernacular; and the necessity to preserve a common content, particularly with regards to doctrine, on the other. Francis writes:

> **The goal of the translation of liturgical texts and of biblical texts for the Liturgy of the Word is to announce the word of salvation to the faithful… and to express the prayer of the Church to the Lord. For this purpose it is necessary to communicate to a given people using its own language all that the Church intended to communicate to other people through the Latin language.**

However, he also notes:

> **While fidelity cannot always be judged by individual words but must be sought in the context of the whole communicative act… some particular terms must also be**

> **considered in the context of the entire Catholic faith because each translation of texts must be congruent with sound doctrine.**

That is, the Church needs to 'communicate' a certain propositional content to its congregations, and facilitate the 'communicative' expression of a certain content on the part of its congregations. Francis acknowledges that this is not merely a case of substituting words in one language for words in another, but requires a more holistic view to the text with regards to genre and presentation. However, he also notes that some specific elements of the text need to be preserved within those varying holistic structures. The implication here is that, even in the face of the theophanic dimension of liturgical language, the 'communicative' dimension is nevertheless highly significant.

This significance can be brought out when we attend closely to the language in which this 'communicative' role is framed. Firstly, the document references "[t]he great principle, established by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, according to which liturgical prayer be accommodated to the comprehension of the people so that it might be understood". This principle, which is not specifically cited, might be identified with the assertion in *Sacrosanctum Concillium*[109] that

> **...in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated… it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.**
>
> (*SC:* §11)

In a similar vein, the document stipulates that

> **…all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy… In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit...**
>
> (*SC:* §14)

[109] Hereafter, *SC*

In order to facilitate this, the document stipulates a number of reforms, including that, because use of first languages "frequently may be of great advantage to the people", Latin need not be used in all situations (*SC:* §36). In other words, the good at stake in attempting to translate the liturgy, as invoked by reference to *Sacrosanctum Concillium* in *Magnum Principium*, is the capacity for the congregation to participate in the Liturgy in a specific manner - this being enabled by an understanding of the text.

So what is this manner of participation? The above passages mention an attunement of mind to voice, or an *intending* of what one says rather than speaking by rote; a co-operation with divine grace; an awareness of what one is doing when one celebrates the rite; and (perhaps redundant in the context of awareness and intention, as well as co-operation with grace which again might imply these features), activity. In short, we might say that *Sacrosanctum Concillium* (and thereby *Magnum Principium*) envisions proper participation in the Liturgy through the cultivation of specific thematic relations, whereby the thinking subject comprehends the activity for themselves, and then chooses to actively apply themselves to it. 'Communicative' language takes on a particular significance here, inasmuch as it is in the operation of this language in which the congregation can participate in this manner.[110]

The significance of this notion of proper participation becomes apparent when we attend to the effects by which participants are 'enriched'. The document lists the following effects:

> **...[it] moves the faithful, filled with "the paschal sacraments," to be "one in holiness"; it prays that "they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith"; the renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire. From the liturgy… grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way.**
>
> (*SC* §10)

Read in dialogue with Francis' analysis of faith given in *Lumen Fidei*, we can identify two key themes here which are repeated in *Magnum Principium*: firstly, we might associate 'oneness in holiness' with the unity of the Christian subjectivity in Christ. Similarly, praying for the congregation to 'hold fast in their lives' to the faith seems to invoke themes of *sight*,

[110] This also adds to our case for reading 'communication' in intensional, rather than representational, terms.

structuring and schematising life. In this vein also, the document describes the liturgy as "an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church... a sacred action surpassing all others" (*Sacrosanctum Concillium:* §7). In other words, it is an activity performed by the Church as a collective subject, which is to say, as participating in Christ's subjectivity.

Secondly, however, there is the theme of the faithful being drawn into 'the compelling love of Christ'. We saw earlier how participation in Christ's subjectivity is a matter of participating in His love, which derives from the amorous economy of *touch.* Similarly, the mentioning of grace being 'poured forth', as well as sanctification and the 'ends' of the activities of the Church also invoke themes of *touch* in the sense of God's self-communication in love, and the 'fulness' represented by this encounter in love. Thus we might say that, for *Sacrosanctum Concillium* (read back through Francis), the liturgy unites faith as both *sight* and *touch.* We participate in the liturgy in the mode of *sight*, and this in turn enables us to maintain the *sight* that characterise Christian subjectivity. However, the effect of doing so (and plausibly the reason why participation in the liturgy enables us to maintain this *sight*) is the entering into the amorous economy of *touch* in the course of that participation.

In short, adequate understanding of the 'communicative' language of the liturgy is a crucial condition for the liturgy to enable the congregation to enter into *touch:* it enables the congregation to adopt the thematic stance whereby operating the language becomes the means of *touching*. This allows us to understand the significance afforded to 'communicative' language in *Magnum Principium*. In this vein, Francis writes that the goal of translating the liturgy is to "announce the word of salvation to the faithful in obedience to the faith", and to "express the prayer of the Church to the Lord". In other words, this 'communicative' language serves as the medium via which the Church participates within the dialogical encounter with God that constitutes the economy of love. This goal is served by vernacular translations of the mass precisely because it enables vernacular languages to play this role in the process. Thus, Francis writes that the liturgical reforms of *Sacrosanctum Concillium* "willingly opened the door so that these [vernacular] versions, as part of the rites themselves, might become the voice of the Church celebrating the divine mysteries along with the Latin language". That is, the Church can employ immanent 'communicative' language as theophanic *forms* through which it enacts the dialogical relationship that is *touch.*

This connects Francis' claim that the words of the liturgy are mysteries and his somewhat gnomic claim that "when [liturgical] words are uttered… God speaks to us. In the Gospel

Christ himself speaks to his people who respond… by prayer to the Lord in the Holy Spirit." The speaking of those words by Christ is a divine action, and the response of the congregation is an entering into the economy of the divine. In doing so, the words are transfigured, becoming expressions of the love that constitutes and circulates within this economy.

In this sense, these words can properly be described as a mystery: they are the material of an act (their speaking), which is a mystery itself. To participate in the Liturgy is to encounter God, quite literally, in conversation. In this vein, Francis quotes John Paul II in *EG* to remind us that the liturgical context goes beyond mere catechesis, or the repetition of thematic truths to be meditated upon. Rather, "the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the eucharistic assembly, is… a dialogue between God and his people, a dialogue in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant are continually restated" (*Dies Domini,* §41; in *EG* §137).

2.2.2. DEVOLUTION AND DIVERSITY

This dimension to 'communicative' liturgical language necessitates pluralism in liturgical translation. Francis writes that although it is necessary to preserve some terms between translations, it is also the fact that "fidelity cannot always be judged by individual words but must be sought in the context of the whole communicative act and according to its literary genre". That is, contextual variations (i.e. the conditions of the 'whole communicative act') render certain forms more or less capable of 'communicating' what they ought, and this contextual sensitivity must be reflected in the way in which liturgy is translated. Verbal forms are used differently by different groups in different contexts, and an in-depth knowledge of these contexts is required in order to adequately deploy those forms within them. Without such knowledge, they may be incapable of being understood in a way that enables their operators to adopt a thematic stance such that they can become the means for *touch*.

As a basic example, in a non-Latin speaking context the forms constituting 'Latin words' will have no 'communicative' meaning. In contrast, forms constituting 'native words' will bear 'communicative' meaning. Thus different forms have to be employed in order to play the same 'communicative' role.

In this vein, the document itself is concerned with applying subsidiarity to the translation of the Liturgy, stipulating that it "is for the Apostolic See to... **recognise adaptations** [to the liturgical text] **approved by the Episcopal Conference according to the norm of law**", and that "[i]t pertains to the Episcopal Conferences to **faithfully** prepare versions of the liturgical

books in vernacular languages... and **to approve** and **publish the liturgical books for the regions for which they are responsible after the confirmation of the Apostolic See.**" While, as Condon notes, such approval requires unanimity on the part of Episcopal Conferences, which will serve as a practical check to developments (see Condon, 2017: Online), this nevertheless indicates an awareness that the regulation of the 'communicative' language employed is best done at a devolved level. This might be read as an indicator of a new sensitivity to the local variations in the 'communicative' roles played by particular forms – that is, to variations in the forms which can be deployed locally in order to *touch*.

This devolution of translation implies that there can (within limits) be legitimate diversity in the forms employed in order to play a given 'communicative' role. Following our example, in some contexts, utterances associated with Latin will be deployed; in others, Spanish, or Hindi. While this pluralism may seem superficial at first glance, it actually provides the basis for a much more substantive pluralism within the unified subjectivity that is the Church (that is, beyond differences between those who talk about "the Eucharist", and those who talk about "l'Eucharistie"). The significance here is that Francis does not thereby reify specific forms with regards to particular actions whereby *touch* is enacted. For some Christians, God will be encountered via an economy involving one set of forms; for others, another. We might say that the formal unity of "the Church" is a "plurivocal" one (Desmond, 2005: 164), intending a diversity of distinct but real interrelating forms.

2.3. LITURGICAL LANGUAGE AND DOCTRINAL LANGUAGE

We talk commonly about the "forms of the faith", including not only forms within the liturgy (specific words, gestures, symbols etc. that are deployed in a liturgical context), but wider elements of the Catholic life including culture, practices, and beliefs. Indeed, we describe Catholicism itself as a "form of life". The question then is, does the possibility for plurivocity within the formal unity of the faith outlined above extend beyond liturgical forms?

The formulations that institute certain truth claims, imperatives, and prohibitions as doctrine can be included among these forms. Thus we might ask more specifically, does this possibility for plurivocity extend to doctrinal forms? That is, can we conceive along these lines of some element of the Church for which certain doctrines do not make up part of the landscape of their belief and practice? We will argue below that, for Francis, doctrinal formulations are ultimately oriented towards playing the same theophanic function as liturgical forms. As with liturgical forms, *to the extent that their variation enables them to fulfil this role*, the answer is therefore yes.

2.3.1. THE HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

Central to understanding how Francis can permit this variation is his relativization of the various weights of doctrines. Francis strongly affirms the indispensability of dogma. However, he contrasts dogma with less 'essential' points of doctrine, and the reasons for this move illuminate the theology of doctrine which allows us to make our argument.

In *LF,* Francis notes that because the articles of the faith express the nature of a single object, and what they reveal is a unity, they themselves comprise a unity. That is, the articles of the faith have a holistic structure in which faith-knowledge is thematised. This holism is important: "because all the articles of faith are interconnected, to deny one of them, even of those that seem least important, is tantamount to distorting the whole". As we have seen, Christian subjectivity involves thematic knowledge. Moreover, insofar as the identity of the Christian collective subject is grounded in the formal unity of its subjectivity, to remove elements of that thematic whole is "to subtract something from the veracity of the communion". Finally, because the subjectivity itself subsists in the unity of the subject in which it is realised, disrupting this unity means damaging it. Thus, Francis writes, "harming the faith means harming communion with the Lord" (*LF* §48). Its integrity is a component of the integrity of the subjectivity itself. In this vein also, Francis writes that the articles of faith must be understood as possessing a kind of *totality:* "its light expands in order to illumine the entire cosmos and all of history". This expresses itself in a *determining* "power to assimilate everything that it meets… purifying all things and bringing them to their finest expression", which Francis additionally identifies with the faith's being "universal and catholic" (*LF* §48).

Roberts reads this kind of emphatic dogmatic commitment as a defensive reaction against hermeneutical *indeterminacy* of the Church's identity (2018: 135). However, there is nuance: Firstly, in *EG* §237, Francis associates the "totality or integrity of the Gospel" with a universality that refuses to homogenise the particulars integrated within it; a universality, moreover, which we shall see in the next chapter defies association with any particular *determining* idea of its form, instead functioning as an *indetermining* principle.

Secondly, his statements above refer explicitly to the articles of faith, and although perhaps we might be able to make arguments towards the *absoluteness* of wider doctrine, *Lumen Fidei* does not pursue any such lines of argumentation here. Thus, additionally, we might take this statement about the absoluteness of the articles of faith as the exception that proves the rule, intimating an *inabsoluteness* to thematic knowledge beyond them.

This is not to say that the wider thematic elements of faith are ephemeral - rather, we must just appreciate that they are not essential to faith for Francis in the way that the articles are. This is also not to say that further arguments cannot be made towards the absoluteness of specific elements of thematic knowledge apart from those contained in the articles.[111] Nor does this mean that we are not obliged to afford a given measure of authority to a particular doctrinal statement merely because it is not in the Creeds (nor ought this to be read as the extreme version of such a claim, as an endorsement of 'theological positivism').[112] The point is that we ought not to read Francis here as implying that every doctrinal position is asserted by faith as equally absolute; not even its revealed truths. Hence Francis writes:

> **All revealed truths derive from the same divine source and are to be believed with the same faith, yet some of them are more important for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel. In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ… In this sense, the Second Vatican Council explained, "in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith". This holds true as much for the dogmas of faith as for the whole corpus of the Church's teaching, including her moral teaching.**
>
> (*EG* §36)[113]

In the above passage, Francis begins by identifying a hierarchy within the revealed truths of the faith. This hierarchy does not mean that there is necessarily a difference in authority between them. What the hierarchy refers to is the relative "centrality" of truths to the Gospel, which Francis illustrates in terms of a priest who preaches more on temperance than charity or justice. In such cases, "an imbalance occurs". The same goes for if we speak "more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God's word" (*EG* §38). He then continues to state that this relationship holds across the whole of the Church's teaching, notably distinguishing between dogma and wider doctrine in the course of their inclusion within this totality.

One way of reading this would be in terms of a crude quantification of time given to themes – e.g. as the claim that Christians ought to think and talk about mercy proportionally more

[111] *C.f.* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1989: §6-11), which outlines an expansive vision of doctrinal authority.
[112] *C.f. Donum Veritatis* §33
[113] Francis is quoting *Unitatis redintegratio* §11 here.

than they ought to think and talk about temperance. However, Francis indicates a more sophisticated hermeneutic when he writes that

> **…each truth is better understood when related to the harmonious totality of the Christian message; in this context all of the truths are important and illumine one another. When preaching is faithful to the Gospel, the centrality of certain truths is evident and it becomes clear that Christian morality is not a form of stoicism, or self-denial, or merely a practical philosophy or a catalogue of sins and faults.**

(*EG* §39)

What Francis seems to be getting at here is that this relationship of relative centrality is a relationship of hermeneutical primacy. There is a "harmonious totality" in which each individual truth is to be understood. Certain truths, as more 'central' within this totality, are the truths in light of which the other truths ought to be read. Hence we realise that 'Christian morality' cannot be reduced to (for example) stoicism – even if it has certain elements which are superficially stoic.

At the heart of this hierarchy is the encounter with God which is the condition and essence of Christian life. He writes that the Gospel fundamentally "invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us". If this invitation becomes obscured, the moral teaching of the Church risks "becoming a house of cards" – "certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options", rather than the Gospel itself (*EG* §39).

That is, all of the truths of the Church are oriented towards the possibility of this encounter, which serves as their hermeneutical key, without which they lose the foundation of their meaning. This orientation ultimately grants a relative in*absoluteness* to those teachings. Without necessarily implying that they are untrue, or lacking in authority, they are nevertheless antecedent to that encounter. Hence Francis admits the possibility of revision, in a number of ways.

Firstly, there is a 'pragmatic' one, aimed towards cultivating the encounter with God rather than expressing truth as such, which Francis frames in terms of 'communication'. Prefiguring the controversy around *AL,* this includes the precepts and maxims for practice, which might inhibit this encounter:

> **In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel… are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs… no longer serve as means of communicating the**

> **Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which… no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives.**

(*EG* §43)

Secondly,

> **The Church… needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth. It is the task of exegetes and theologians to help "the judgment of the Church to mature". The other sciences also help to accomplish this… Differing currents of thought… if open to being reconciled by the Spirit… can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine… this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.**

(*EG* §40)[114]

Here, Francis describes the Gospel as having "inexhaustible riches" of which there are "different facets". In order to fully "bring out and develop" these, the Church must "grow in her interpretation" of revelation, and also "her understanding of truth". This means that doctrine cannot be understood as a "monolithic body". Instead it admits development and variation ("variety") – that is, change. Moreover, this process of change is not a unilateral one. Rather, the Church's teachings can be informed and developed with input from practitioners within the various sciences, including (contra *Veritatis Splendor*) theologians, who by implication are not bound solely by the state of development constituted by the *determinations* of the historical Magisterium as it exists at a given moment in time. This indicates the dynamic of knowledge indicated in the previous chapter: thematic theological knowledge develops in history from, and expresses in its own way, the mysterious knowledge of the encounter. In other words, it is not *absolute,* but relative to this encounter, admitting *indeterminacy* and non-*totality.*

Thirdly, there is a more superficial issue of translation. Francis writes that

> **…today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. "The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another". There are**

[114] Francis is quoting *Dei verbum* §12 here.

> **times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes… hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that "the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning".**
>
> (*EG* §41)[115]

Because languages are historically relative, they can vary by context in their capacity to 'communicate' adequately. In other words, they can vary in their capacity to effectively thematise truth, potentially disordering the intension of their users, preventing them from 'thinking' truth.

In summary, for Francis, doctrine is ordered towards the encounter that lies at the heart of Christian subjectivity. In doing so, it admits relativity to that encounter in three registers: a pragmatic one, based around its capacity to facilitate that encounter; an epistemic one, based around its capacity to express the truth of that encounter; and a linguistic one, based around its capacity to reproduce thematic knowledge across linguistic contexts. The first two registers directly presuppose this encounter as their condition, and the third indirectly as the condition of the translated formulae.

2.3.2. DOCTRINE AND THEOPHANY

The principle by which this variation is made possible or appropriate, according to Francis, is pastoral. Francis reminds us instead that "missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*" (*EG* §15). To this end, he proposes a re-evaluation of the institutions and practices of the Church; Francis' "missionary option (*EG* §27), which we saw earlier.

This includes the way we negotiate doctrine. We have just seen that, for Francis, some truths are more 'central' to the faith than others, where this 'centrality' corresponds to hermeneutical priority. This priority is defined by their service to the encounter which lies at the heart of the Christian life. This prioritization obtains particularly when reading these truths in a "missionary key" (*EG* §34) – that is, with an evangelical hermeneutic which Francis further characterises in terms of "a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually

[115] Francis quotes John XXIII (1962) and then John Paul II's *Ut unum sint* §19.

reach everyone without exception or exclusion" (*EG* §35). This hermeneutic recognises that "the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary". It deploys the hierarchy in service of this, ensuring that "the message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth", so as to become "all the more forceful and convincing" (*EG* §35).

In this context, the purpose of doctrine is ultimately pastoral. In this vein, Barret describes Francis as directing us towards "a *practical* use of doctrine rather than a *conceptual* use of doctrine", wherein doctrines are deployed in order to orient us properly to a situation (2018: 125). Thinking of the controversy over *Amoris Laetitia,* Barrett notes that this method lacks "conceptual precision regarding *which* doctrines ought to illuminate *which* situations", which in turn could "lead to different moral evaluations of the same case" (2018: 126). However, once we recognise that this orientation is fundamentally an evangelizing one, the picture becomes a little clearer: the doctrines which one ought to employ are the ones which facilitate the divine encounter that lies at the centre of Christian life.

In short, for Francis, the purpose of doctrine is fundamentally as a tool for evangelization. This opens up the possibility for a theophanic understanding of doctrine itself: one of the ways in which it can (perhaps best) serve evangelization is to serve as the medium for theophany. We are prompted towards this theophanic understanding by several factors.

Firstly, we have already seen that Francis affords a sacramental dimension to the bodies of doctrine that are the Decalogue and the Apostle's Creed, which he conceives of as "storehouses" of the Church's memory. The Decalogue has a theophanic aspect in the specific sense of directing us towards forms of life in which we can encounter God, rather than the words themselves serving as those forms. Francis' theology of the Creeds goes further: Francis identifies reciting the Creed as an occasion for theophany because, in doing so, we enter into the life and history of the Church as the subject which responds to God. This does not seem altogether different from the activity of 'thinking with' doctrine: we noted how faith-knowledge has a thematic component or *sight,* and that part of the subjectivity of the Church is this shared *sight.* Understood as part of this *sight,* allowing doctrine to disclose the world to us can be understood in terms of operating this subjectivity. In this way, to deploy doctrinal language is to take our place within the Church – which is to say, to enter into its life and history. Thus Francis' understanding of the Creed enables an understanding of doctrine as also playing a more direct theophanic role.

Secondly, Francis talks about doctrine in poetic terms that can be read as connoting a theophanic dimension. He writes that "instead of seeming to impose new obligations, [evangelizers] should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet" (*EG* §15). Evangelization necessarily involves imparting doctrine. However, in this context, this doctrine is conveyed in such a way as to reveal a transcendent dimension ("horizon", "beauty"), and to invite the hearer to join the evangelizer in their orientation towards it. Here, doctrine can be understood as playing a similar role to (beautiful) liturgical forms. Similarly, he talks of the Gospel's "freshness", and "the fragrance of the Gospel" as a quality of proper teaching (*EG* §39). This image portrays proper teaching as having something more than just propositional content – particularly when we take into account his association of this "freshness" with the "*[e]ternal newness*" of Christ, which can "renew our lives and our communities", and by which he "constantly amazes us by his divine creativity" (*EG* §11). These images of sanctification and transcendence give a quasi-sacramental resonance to this "freshness" and "fragrance" which could easily be read in a theophanic sense.

Thirdly, there is the theology of encounter that lies at the heart of Francis' understanding of evangelization. As we saw in the previous chapter, for Francis, we are evangelized when we are touched by God's loving 'gaze' – which, in some cases, can be instantiated in the loving 'gaze' of a human Other (see Oltvai, 2018: 323). This tells us more substantively what this sacramental dimension constitutes: doctrine, as that which the Other communicates to us, can serve as the form in which this love touches the recipient.

Finally, Francis weaves themes of beauty, liturgy and doctrine in such a way as to identify the sacramental function of doctrinal language and the sacramental function of liturgical language. He notes that the Church "evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving" (*EG* §24). In other words, Francis associates liturgical form and evangelization in two ways: firstly, the beauty of liturgical forms is in some sense associated with the work of evangelization in the course of celebration. This can be read as blurring the conceptual distinctions between liturgical form and the forms present in or constituting evangelization. Secondly, he establishes that evangelization can take place through the forms of the liturgy, by virtue of their beauty. Given that in a liturgical context we know that these forms (or more specifically, the linguistic forms) can serve as a site of encounter with

the divine, this indicates that an encounter *specifically as it occurs in the liturgy* is at least *one mode* of evangelization.

This is developed in *EG* §34 when he writes that it is "the very heart of the Gospel" which gives Church teachings their "meaning, beauty and attractiveness". This formula is redolent of the three transcendentals – Truth, Beauty, and the Good. Here we have a poetic intimation that those teachings communicate the divine itself within them. Later, in *EG* §36, he notes that "[i]n this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ". This establishes a parallel between doctrine and liturgy in the context of evangelization: doctrine manifests a beauty in which the love of God touches us. This explicitly associates this beauty not just with transcendence, but with the encounter by which we are evangelized - the same encounter that occurs in the liturgy. In other words, doctrinal language in evangelization evangelizes in the same way as the beautiful forms (including the linguistic forms) of the liturgy. The economy of liturgical language is not just one mode of evangelization, but *the* mode. Consequently, doctrinal language, ordered towards evangelization, is ordered towards the economy of liturgical language. Thus, for Francis, theophanic liturgical language serves as the model for doctrinal language in this respect.

In short, doctrinal forms can play a theophanic role comparable to liturgical forms - both indirectly (as Francis identifies with the Decalogue), but also directly. The upshot of this is that the relativity of liturgical form to encounter is reproduced in a specifically doctrinal register. In turn, the plurivocal *indeterminacy* and non-*totality* necessitated by the sacramental economy of liturgical language is also necessitated in a doctrinal context.

Hence Francis writes that "Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence" (*EG* §259). Sinicalchi reads this as an appeal to "supra-rational encounters with believers, which go above mere evidential approaches" (2018: 135). These encounters with believers, as we have seen, are media for an encounter with God. Leaving aside the question of whether this mystical dimension is truly supra-*rational,* or whether we conceive of the knowledge *touch* as a non-thematic form of reason, what Sinicalchi identifies is an ultimate deprioritising of thematicity in favour of encounter. To indulge in a pun (or two), Francis recognises that form is not to be valued *over* substance, but to be recognised as able to present that substance itself in ways

that go beyond mere verbal expression; evangelizing incarnation is more primary than 'communicative' evangelism.[116]

This in turn permits the 'plurivocity' appropriate to liturgical forms in a doctrinal context. The theophanic understanding of liturgical language in *MP* shows how the issue of translation is at once also tied to the 'pragmatic' issue of sustaining the encounter that lies at the heart of the Christian life. We might say that there is thus a 'functionalist' principle governing translation within the Church in the context of liturgical language: the end of theological language in this context is ultimately to serve as the means for *touch*. Translation is therefore governed by the priority of encounter both in the sense of preserving thematic knowledge about this encounter, but also (and more fundamentally) a teleological priority: our theological-liturgical formulations are relativized to this end. To this end, doctrinal variation along the lines of liturgical variation is permitted by Francis' first and third modes of doctrinal relativization (pragmatic and linguistic), which are integrated in this 'functionalist' prioritization of theophany.[117]

2.4. PLURALISM AS A GOOD

In summary, Francis' Marian prioritisation of encounter over Petrine institutional form means that variation in form is permissible when at the service of cultivating the encounter with God towards which the Christian life is ultimately directed. This even extends to doctrinal formulae. This enables a positive-affective approach to difference. We can think about variation in terms of *inclusive* and *exclusive* variation. *Inclusive variation* is when forms which are not universally included in the faith-life of the Church are included in the faith-lives of a subset of the Church. An example of this might be a popular devotion specific to a region. *Exclusive variation* is when certain forms are omitted from the faith-life of some subset of the Church. An example of this might be a couple who have a committed, sexual relationship outside of marriage.[118] We will begin by looking at inclusive variation, as this

[116] In this vein, Bevans (2015a) reads *EG* itself as embodying an attempt to elicit an encounter with the reader beyond the activity of merely passing on information.

[117] Connolly notes that the institutional shift of the Church towards the global south means that Francis' missional faith, in rooting the hermeneutics of the faith in the experience and activities of previously excluded groups, will inevitably be shaped by "different priorities" and questions to those of Western-centric evangelization (2015: 401). What Connolly identifies is that Francis' evangelical paradigm offers not just a change in style, but opens up the possibility for substantive developments in the faith itself. This is particularly true by our reading, which, in recognising a contextually-bound sacramental dimension to doctrine, argues that this shift is not only possible, but *necessary.*

[118] This typology is obviously not a rigid one - including one form may involve excluding another, or vice-versa.

illustrates this possibility the most clearly. We will then see how this also holds for exclusive variation, as exemplified by Francis' pastoral approach in *AL.*

2.4.1. BASISMO, AND THE NECESSITY OF PLURALISM

An example of inclusive variation undergirding pluralism might be found in what Lehmann describes as *basismo*: "an outlook on social, religious and political issues which starts from the viewpoint that the people are possessed with special, albeit often hidden, insights and untainted beliefs" (1996: ix). This approach claims "that political and religious salvation necessarily involve listening to the people and gaining empathy, even a mystical communion, with their culture". In its South American context, *basismo* found expression in Ecclesial Base Communities, Catholic workers' associations, liberation theology, and grassroots pastoral initiatives (1996: 13).

Boff identifies a key characteristic of churches in Ecclesial Base Communities, which captures the aspect of *basismo* pertinent here: "a re-sacramentalisation of the life of the community, rather than just seven sacraments, in which it "learns to discover God in its own life, struggles, and happenings"" (1982: 138). This can be seen in the practice of biblical interpretation within these communities, in which members of the community would come together *as* a community, and "inject concrete reality and their own situation" into their interpretations (1982: 199). Mesters analyses three factors at play in this process: "*Community"*, or "the con-text"; "*Reality*", or "the pre-text", and "*the Bible*", or the "text" simpliciter (1982: 200). The word of God is to be discovered in each of these 'texts', and they play complementary roles in discerning His word. The interpretative principle here is the community, as the subject which reflects upon the other two texts. The question of how much these other two texts truly 'exist' in their own right, apart from their interpretation, is somewhat moot here – what is important is that this process involves reflecting on particular situations in light of the community's own understanding of their faith and its content, and without *determining* mediation by an often absent hierarchy (Bruneau, 1980: 226).

In short, what *basismo* affirms is that believers can identify forms in the context of their own lives via which they can relate to God. In learning to 'discover God' in the course of its life, the community can construct a hermeneutic which reads the images and events of that life in relation to the narratives found within Bible study. Through this encoding, these forms become 'sacramentalised', serving as sites and means for encounter with God. In this way, involvement with the culture of the people enables the deployment of a new set of forms via which the life of faith can be lived out.

Significantly, *basismo* affirms that this process of encoding can be done autonomously, in a subsidiary way by the very people whose lives are being encoded. Lehmann notes that this outlook is founded on a notion of "the people" (1996: 8). Implicit in *basismo* is the idea that this 'people' is capable, through its culture and situation, to successfully operate as an interpretative authority with relative autonomy. That is, *basismo* fundamentally affirms the authority of local groups to operate this hermeneutic. In other words, it affirms the possibility and legitimacy of pluralism in *sight* within the collective subjectivity of the Church.

The Argentine *Theology of the People* expresses this principle in a mystical, historicising mode that is paralleled by Francis' ecclesiology. This was a movement associated particularly with the theologians Lucio Gera (1924-2012) and Rafael Tello (1917-2002), who worked as part of the Argentine *Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Practice* (*COEPAL*). *COEPAL* was established with the aim of renewing pastoral practice in the wake of Vatican II's vision for a more active laity (Scannone, 2016: 119-120). Drawing from *Gaudium et Spes'* language of "the people of God" and its recovery of culture as a theological locus, as well as the option for the poor championed by the *Episcopal Conference of Latin America* (*CELAM*), at the *Medellin* and *Puebla* conferences, the *Theology of the People* identified the people of God with the poor, and sought to resource the theological insight embodied in their culture (2016: 121). While Scannone identifies it as a current within the broader field of Liberation Theology (1979: 221), its methodology was guided by a rejection of the terms of Marxist class analysis as ultimately alien to the lives of those it studied.[119] Instead, the *Theology of the People* looked to an analysis informed by the popular culture that structured their lives and preserved their communal memory, thereby incarnating or *inculturating* their faith (Rourke, 2016b: 73).

Popular piety was identified as a significant mode of this cultural incarnation. This was understood as integrating the wider life and struggles of the people into the life of faith, thereby rendering them sites for encounter with the divine. In the experience of this popular faith, the specific spirit of the people becomes apparent, and this served as the "hermeneutic locus" in the *Theology of the People*'s reading of popular culture (Luciani, 2017: 24).

The challenge of the *Theology of the People* is that of a conversion within the Church itself so that it can come to recognise the location of the people and enter into "their own *ethos*"

[119] This is not to say that the *Theology of the People* rejected the idea of class struggle; it merely recognised it as a historical reality to be understood by reference to the life of the people, rather than a fundamental hermeneutical principle (Scannone, 2016: 122).

(Luciani, 2017: 12). This involves the recognition that disparate cultural forms of popular piety are an expression of a cultural theological knowledge, and thus a precondition of faith and a source of values upon the basis of which a people can continue to be evangelized (Scannone, 1979: 219). This means detaching our conception of the faith from the 'central' (that is, *totalised*) form of European Catholicism. Rather, this centre gains its meaning from the "*periphery*" that is the lives of the poor (Luciani, 2017: 7). Intrinsic to this is the idea of pluralism. Because culture is the vehicle for faith and subjectivity therein, individuals have a right to their culture - and because there are many cultures, recognising this right involves recognising the necessity of pluralism (2017: 32-34).

Borghesi reads Francis as making a similar move, linking the plurality of historical forms to pluralism in the Church, via an affirmation of popular piety.[120] We have seen above how the life of faith, for Francis, is centred around mystical encounter with both divine and human Others. Borghesi reads Francis' second 'principle' in *EG,* "realities are greater than ideas" as prioritising the 'reality' of the Other, and the encounter with them, over abstract "ideologies" which centre their analysis of the world in ideal schemas. This leads Francis in *EG* §90 to praise popular piety, as a form of faith which centres interpersonality and encounter (2018: 283-4). Thus the prioritisation of encounter in the life of faith enables pluralism in the forms in which faith is embodied.

Furthering the similarity, Francis also outlines the stance that pluralism is not only permitted, but necessary. Francis affirms inculturation as a way that the Church can evangelize, as well as to assimilate and sanctify diverse cultures, both enriching and being enriched by their values (*EG* §116). He also recognises that inculturation is a way in which faith can be preserved, and a people can continue to evangelize themselves (*EG* §112). In this context, he writes that "[t]he history of the Church shows that Christianity… will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root". This "diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each in accordance with its own culture" is an expression of "genuine catholicity" (*EG* §116). We can associate this plural, catholic vision with Francis' vision for a 'polyhedral' universalism that embraces and sustains the

[120] Borghesi is not alone in identifying commonalities between Francis' theology and the *Theology of the People,* particularly as expressed in *EG.* For more in-depth analyses of these commonalities, see Scannone (2016), Rourke (2016a; 2016b), Deck (2016), and Luciani (2017). All of these commentators convincingly trace the influence of the movement on Francis the historical individual. Although our project is not to construct a biographical, 'author-centered' reading, these parallels serve as useful, concrete examples of the relevant principles at work, which can illustrate and enrich our own reading.

particularity of the local (*EG* §234-6). Francis sees in this model "the totality or integrity of the Gospel", which embraces "everyone" (*EG* §237). This unity through the universal embrace of the Gospel mirrors Francis' understanding of the unity of the Church in *LF* §47: the unity of the Church derives from the unity of its faith, both in the sense of the truth towards which it is oriented, and also the shared nature of that faith as an orientation towards Christ's history with us. Read in this context, the catholicity of the Church, in all its cultural (that is, formal) plurality, must be understood in terms of this universalism. Thus the Church cannot impose a single set of forms such that these cultural distinctions are negated: this would amount to a homogenising *totalisation* of that set.

The result of this is a loosening of the link between any one specific set of forms, and the theophanic function which they can play. Firstly, the possibility of plurality implies the possibility of multiple forms adequately playing similar roles in the life of faith. Secondly, rejecting false universalism involves the rejection of attempts to *totalise* a *determinate* set of forms so as to negate those external to it. Beyond this, however, what the possibility of *basismo* reveals is that pluralism is not only permissible, but is in fact *inescapable* – precisely because faith is lived out (that is, we are *touched*, and grow in *sight*) in a variety of contexts, the form of the Church must admit a plurality that corresponds to the historical plurality of these contexts.

Moreover, this necessity *makes a good of pluralism*. In order to navigate this required plurality, we must attend to formal variations in context, as well as the experiences of the believers who employ these various forms in those contexts, in order to evaluate them. This in turn, however, presupposes a more hopeful outlook: in attending to these factors, we are ultimately looking for an encounter with God. As such, our hermeneutic of difference becomes more *positive-affective:* variation poses a problem, but it also holds a solution, and an opportunity for faith.

In a broader sense, the recognition of pluralism as not only necessary, but potentially enriching, disposes us to view alterity in general in a less distrustful, and more hopeful way. Hence Francis writes of a Church that truly inculturates its faith: "In this way, the Church takes up the values of different cultures and becomes *sponsa ornata monilibus suis*, "the bride bedecked with her jewels" (cf. Is 61:10)" (*EG* §116). When confronted with an Otherness that defies our attempts to *totalise* particular institutional forms, and the *indeterminacy* that it thus embodies, we do not have to turn inwards and negate it in fear. Rather, we can look to it joyfully, as a new expression of the plenitudinous transcendence

that those institutions must ultimately follow and serve. In short, we are equipped to take a *positive affective* stance. Thus Francis lays the ground for a fundamentally *reparative* ecclesiology.

2.4.2. EXCLUSIVE VARIATION

The challenging aspect to this is that it applies as much to exclusive as inclusive variation, as both flow from the same principle. We saw in the last chapter how our relationship to God is not exhausted by the demands of justice, but rather, the determinations of justice are relative to this relationship. Thus mercy may permit this variation where justice alone would not: in *Amoris Laetitia,* Francis invokes John Paul II's "law of gradualness" to recognise "gradualness in the prudential exercise of free acts on the part of subjects who are not in a position to understand, appreciate, or fully carry out the objective demands of the law" (*AL* §295; see *FC* §34). We can also make a parallel argument here: the obligation to include certain forms in our lives is relative to their theophanic capacity in our particular case.

Furthermore, graduality in the obligation to include certain forms does not amount to a "gradualness of law, as if there were different degrees or forms of precept in God's law for different individuals and situations" (*FC* §35): as we noted in the previous chapter, it is intrinsic to the nature of justice that it can be superseded by mercy. We can read Francis' permission of variation in doctrinal forms in a similar way: because doctrine is ultimately pastorally oriented, it is intrinsically appropriate for its inclusion to be relative to the pastoral situation. Because of this intrinsic orientation, we are not proposing the recognition of precepts by different 'degree' or 'form'. Rather, because this variation is a function of the nature of law itself, the law is fully realised in that variation.

Against this, Eccheverria reads Francis' appeal to the hierarchy of truths as an "inclusive hermeneutical principle" which seeks to illustrate the interconnectedness, and thus indispensability, of all doctrine (2015: 132). Likewise, under our reading, Francis does invoke a holistic approach to doctrine. Similarly, our understanding of the hierarchy does not mean that we can approach certain truths with indifference. Nevertheless, we have seen that it *can also* serve as an exclusive principle. The reason for this is because it discriminates between doctrines not in terms of truth, but on a *functional* basis.

The possibility of this turns on the distinction between claiming that something is true, and claiming that we should respond to this truth in a certain way. In this vein, Francis writes of locally variable popular piety, which we took as a model of the principle of variation within

the Church, that "it discovers and expresses that content more by way of symbols than by discursive reasoning, and in the act of faith greater accent is placed on *credere in Deum* than on *credere Deum*" (*EG* §124). This distinction between *credere Deum,* or belief 'about' God, and *credere in Deum,* or a *relational*, trusting belief 'in' God, reflects this distinction: the latter indicates what is true about God; the former, what ought to be done in response to God. Superficially, this distinction dissociates the affective knowledge of popular piety from doctrinal matters. However, as we have seen, Francis' 'pastoral option', with its 'functionalist' approach to variation in form and corresponding emphasis on discernment, establishes this kind of *relational* approach as the primary critical principle by which doctrinal variation is to be negotiated. In short, we might say that, for Francis, issues of *credere Deum* are secondary to the issue of *credere in Deum* – and this priority enables Francis to discriminate between forms without making distinctions in truth.

Eccheveria recognises this distinction: in reading Francis, he seeks to respond to Catholics who are concerned by Francis' invocation of the hierarchy of truths, alongside his (*qua* historical individual) criticism of an alleged overemphasis on relatively peripheral issues such as "abortion, contraception, and homosexuality" (2015: 126), which they read as encouraging "indifference" towards these issues (2015: 131). Here the issue is ultimately not so much one of truth as practice, or response to truth, in which specific responses to various truths can take more or less prominent a place. In this vein, Eccheverria reads Francis through John Paul II's *Evangelium vitae,* to argue that this integrative approach requires us to culturally embody Catholic life, specifically in the moral dimensions related to these issues, as part of an effort to evangelize non-Catholic culture (2015: 138-9). The difference between Eccheverria's reading and our own, is that we read Francis as recognising that this kind of project takes place within contexts that render various forms more, *but also less*, effective in evangelization. Thus, for Francis, exclusive variation is not only possible but necessary.

We do agree with Eccheverria on one point, however: Francis does not endorse indifferentism. Where this need for variation means the neglect of certain forms that might otherwise be necessary parts of the faith, Francis' holism entails that this should be temporary, and with an eye to their eventual integration. To put it differently, we ought not to read Francis' deployment of the hierarchy as meaning that doctrines can be chosen or transformed at will.

Rather, what our reading of Francis offers is a more systematic account of how variation in the faith of particular individuals and groups within the Church can be reflected in variation

in practice so as to lead them to greater faith. Francis' insight is that faith can exist on a continuum, and even a truncated and distorted faith is better than no faith at all. Because of this, our reading enables a more flexible pastoral approach to discipline, undergirded by the same positive affective stance we previously associated with inclusive variation: when we look at someone who doesn't seem to be 'doing faith properly', we are encouraged to view this variation first and foremost as a case of faith in a difficult context.

This way of viewing means (without losing sight of the ideal) focusing on what *has* been achieved, or what *is* included in a given situation, rather than centring our hermeneutic around identifying deficiencies. Francis' pastoral approach in *AL* can be read as reflective of this hermeneutic. He writes that "a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in "irregular" situations, as if they were stones to throw at people's lives". Rather, instead of taking an antagonistic stance, pastors must exercise discernment in order to "find possible ways of responding to God and growing in the midst of limits", opening "the way of grace and of growth, and… paths of sanctification which give glory to God" (*AL* §305). In other words, a pastor's focus should ultimately be towards cultivating faith, rather than deploying doctrine as the basis for a negative hermeneutics of peoples' lives.

At the heart of this is the recognition that what is achieved in difficulty is particularly valuable: "a small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order, but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties" (*EG* §44; in *AL* §305). This undergirds a positive affective stance towards faith lives that fall short of the ideal. Hence, for example, he recognises that although non-marital unions are not the ideal, and that marriage should ultimately be pursued, he writes that in such cases "respect also can be shown for those signs of love which in some way reflect God's own love" (*AL* §294).

2.4.3. DISCERNMENT AGAIN

However, if Francis rejects indifferentism, we must be able to make discriminations. How can we tell whether a given instance of variation is legitimate or not?

Approaching variation in this pastoral context brings our reflections on pluralism back into contact with the issue of discernment: as we saw in our last chapter, Francis encourages us to employ the mystical knowledge that discernment provides in these situations, orienting ourselves in light the individual's relationship with God, in awareness of the excess of this

relationship (and thus the situation) over *determining* principles. In short, it is discernment which can allow us to make these discriminations.

This does not entirely solve the issue. Discernment involves a significant measure of *indeterminacy:* as we saw in our last chapter, attends to our relationship with God in excess of over any specific set of *determinations.* In this way, the potential for variation cannot be *determined* a priori. Rather, it must be approached from a stance of 'unselfing', which refuses to assert one's capacity as knower over the transcendence of God as Other in which this excess lies.

However, Francis reassures us about the process of discernment in this context.[121] We noted above that *basismo* provides a model for the pluralism that Francis champions. We also noted that it affords the local community a kind of interpretive authority by which it can identify what variation is required in its own faith-life, particularly in terms of biblical hermeneutics and popular piety. Francis identifies this interpretive capacity in the context of popular piety with "affective connaturality born of love" (*EG* §125). 'Affective connaturality', invokes a Thomist concept of "affective knowledge", which pertains to wisdom in the form of "affective tendencies and moral and religious habits which put that person in contact with whatever it is about which one exercises judgment" (Rafael Tello, *Fundamentos de una Nueva Evangelización* (unpublished), trans. in Deck, 2015: 54).[122] Francis writes:

> **I think of the steadfast faith of those mothers tending their sick children who, though perhaps barely familiar with the articles of the creed, cling to a rosary; or of all the hope poured into a candle lighted in a humble home with a prayer for help from Mary, or in the gaze of tender love directed to Christ crucified… these actions… are the manifestation of a theological life nourished by the working of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5).**
>
> (*EG* §125)

Affective connaturality, for Francis, represents a working of grace which enables the faithful to make discernments about the forms of their faith-life. This is expressed in the "*sensus fidei*", or the "instinct of faith… which helps [the faithful] discern what is truly of God": Francis describes this as being given to the people of God by virtue of their baptism, and describes it as a working of the Spirit that "gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities,

[121] And perhaps these assurances can be carried over to our reflections on discernment in the previous chapter.
[122] *C.f.* ST I-II q. 64 a.1; q. 162 a. 3 ad 1m

and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression" (*EG* §119).[123] In short, for Francis, recognising the Church as people of God means recognising its capacity for affective knowledge, and the reliability of its discernments. That is, even though discernment itself might be an *indeterminate* process, Francis invites us to trust in the subject which makes those discernments. In other words we must also approach this *indeterminacy* with hope – that is, in a positive affective manner.

3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have shown how Francis' mysticism leads to an ecclesiology which prioritises the 'Marian' aspects of the Church over the Petrine. The Church is the collective Christian subject, arising from a transformative encounter with God as Other; its institutional forms must thus follow this encounter, wherever and however it arises. This leads him to what we described as a "plurivocal" model of Church unity, admitting difference within itself corresponding to the historical variations in the contexts in which that mystery unveils itself. This can include not only variation in liturgical forms, but in doctrinal forms. The measure by which we must approach this plurivocity is one of discernment, which is inherently *indeterminate.* However, Francis also recognizes a capacity in the faithful to make reliable discernments – an affective connaturality with God, expressed in the *sensus fidei.* This encourages us to approach discernment in hope.

[123] The precise nature of this recognition is contentious**.** Without specifying the exact relationship between the two, Francis associates the *sensus fidei* here with the infallibility of the people of God *in credendo.* Eccheverria reads this association as implying that this infallibility belongs to the *sensus fidei.* He also notes that this infallibility applies to the "*entire body of the faithful*" (*LF* §12; in 2015: 195) or the universal Church in its entirety. In this context, Eccheverria reads Francis as construing the *sensus fidei* in terms of what he calls the *sensus fidelium,* or the exercise of the *sensus fidei* on the part of the Church in its entirety (2015: 196-197).

In conflating the *sensus fidei* in this passage and the *sensus fidelium,* Eccheverria conflates Francis' recognition of the *sensus fidei's* powers to discern with the infallibility of the *sensus fidelium.* In this context, its capacity to reliably make discernments is contingent upon the conditions for the authentic exercise of the *sensus fidelium,* including "*universal agreement [universuum consensum] in matters of faith and morals", "from the bishops to the least of the lay faithful"* (*LF* §112; in 2015: 195); something that implies alignment with the *determinations* of the teachings of the Magisterium (2015: 195).

This reading challenges our ability to interpret this passage as affirming the *sensus fidei* as a principle of local variation and particular discernment. However, Francis does not specify that this association is a relationship of belonging. Moreover, as we have seen, Francis describes the *sensus fidei* in terms of affective connaturality, which he illustrates through examples of the faith of elements *within* and distinct from the Church as a whole ("mothers" and "Christians"). In this context, we ought to read the document as referring to the *sensus fidei* specifically, as it belongs to individual Christians.

Although we will treat this in more detail in the next chapter, we can see how our reading of Francis lays the ground for an ecclesiology motivated by a reparative hermeneutics. Firstly, it challenges us to think of the unity of the Church as incorporating difference or variation. Variation, both inclusive and exclusive, is both permitted and required – so long as it is ultimately at the service of evangelization, or facilitating the transformative encounter with God that lies at the heart of the faith. This means that the forms of the Church, including its doctrinal forms, are relative to the encounter from which they arise, and to which they are oriented. That is, they are *non-absolute.* This also means that we seek to *determine* the form of the Church by *totalising* models of unity or forms of faith so as to negate variation in their inclusion. Rather, we must embrace the *non-totality* and corresponding *indeterminacy* presented by alterity, so long as that alterity is ultimately born of difference in the conditions of an encounter that ultimately expresses itself in the collective subject that is the faithful Church. Moreover, this understanding of variation enables us to conceive of particular examples in terms of achieving faith. This in turn enables us to take a *positive-affective* stance towards it. Finally, we must approach questions of variation via an *indeterminate* process of discernment, which we are encouraged to view hopefully, or with *positive affect.* The upshot of this is the possibility for incorporating real plurivocity, and the *indeterminacy* that it embodies, within the unity of the Church.

In our next chapter, we will argue that Francis' plurivocity is enabled by a metaxological metaphysics of unity. In doing so, we will read his ecclesiology through his epistemology, arguing that his plurivocal ecclesiology is made intelligible via a relativization of ideas of unity which might preclude it. This allows us to re-express the *indeterminacy* posed by alterity in terms of the *indeterminacy* of knowledge outlined in the last chapter. The upshot of this is that Francis' ecclesial Marian priority makes talk of the unity of the Church obey the priority of non-thematic mystical knowledge as outlined in our third chapter. We will then move from this to show the ecclesiological implications of Francis' 'unselfing' mysticism in this context, and outline the challenge posed by Francis' ecclesiology to paranoid Catholicism as represented by the ecclesiology of *Veritatis Splendor.*

V. THE CRITICAL CHALLENGE OF MARIAN PRIORITY

In chapter three, we saw how *Lumen Fidei* presents an epistemology which resists paranoid *determination* via *totalisation.* All (*determinate*) thematic knowledge, which Francis refers to as *sight,* arises out of an intrinsically *indeterminate* un-thematic knowledge, or *touch*. The *indeterminacy* of *touch* is a function of the ultimately mysterious nature of its object - God as the transcendent Other. Because *sight* arises from this ground, it is limited by two horizons: a *qualitative* horizon, delineating the intrinsic excess of *touch* over *sight* as such; and a *quantitative* horizon, which delineates the bounds of what has been given over to *sight* at a given moment in history. In short, for Francis, our thematic knowledge can neither claim to be *total,* nor *absolute.* Consequently, there can be no *absolute* or *total* determinations by that knowledge. We also saw how this provides us with a model of virtuous knowing revolving around an aesthetics of 'unselfing' obedience, wherein the subject does not seek to impose their capacity as knower over and against transcendence. We contrasted this with the aesthetic of 'unquestioning' in *VS,* wherein the subject does not seek to impose their will over and against transcendence (specifically in the form of the moral law).

In chapter four, we saw how Francis' ecclesiology resists the *absolutization, totalisation* and *determination* of the forms which can be incorporated within the unity of the Church. We argued that Francis' mysticism establishes a 'Marian priority', wherein the 'Petrine' institutional structures or forms of the Church (including doctrinal forms or formulations) arise from, and must always be ordered towards facilitating, the encounter that lies at the heart of faith. This means that they admit a certain *inabsoluteness,* being relative to the conditions which enable this encounter. We then argued that historical pluralism requires a concomitant 'plurivocity' in the forms of the Church, precluding the *totalisation* of any particular set of forms. This includes doctrinal formulations, although we also noted that the variation in their inclusion which Francis champions does not imply a variation in truth. Finally, we argued that this leads to a positive affective stance towards pluralism, and the *indeterminacy* that it represents.

This chapter will read this ecclesiology through the epistemology of chapter three in order to critique ecclesiologies which embody a more paranoid approach. We will begin by responding to the worry that the model of ecclesial unity emerging from this is not true 'unity'. We will argue that it is grounded in a mystical metaphysics of unity. This reproduces

the relationship between mystical and thematic knowledge identified in chapter three. We will argue from this that ecclesial unity, for Francis, cannot be reduced to any particular *totalised* idea of unity, but rather possesses a transcendent dimension which resists this reduction. Consequently, when we 'think' the unity of the Church, we can only do so in an *indeterminate* and *non-absolute* way. The chapter will conclude by exploring the challenge of this ecclesiology to paranoid Catholicism as embodied in the ecclesiology of *VS,* through Francis' discussion of contemporary Gnosticism to articulate a critique of the paranoid ecclesiology of *Veritatis Splendor.*

1. PLURIVOCITY AND METAXIS

One suspicion we might have about this plurivocal 'unity' is that it is not intelligible as such. This is because ideas of unity and totality are closely, if perhaps superficially, linked: to 'apprehend the unity' of a thing can also be parsed as 'to circumscribe it in thought, in its totality'. In short, to unify, at least intuitively, is to totalize a *determinate* conception of it. As a result, we might wonder whether we really can 'think' this plurivocal unity. This is illustrated when Roberts notes that the spiritual life of 'the people', to which Francis' ecclesiology affords priority over our ideas of ecclesial unity, is often syncretistic, and motivated by pragmatic concerns in the face of precarity, in ways that trouble the very notion of a *determinate* ecclesial identity itself (2018: 136-137).

1.1. EQUIVOCITY AND HOMOGENEITY

We can restate this in a more sophisticated way. Desmond distinguishes between "four basic senses of being": "the univocal, the equivocal, the dialectical, and the metaxological" (2005: 158).[124] He writes,

[124] This typology is neither total nor exclusive: Rubenstein (2005) identifies a post-Heideggerian impetus to escape immanentizing univocal ontologies which reduce Being to beings. However, she also recognises Hannah Arendt's critique of Heidegger himself, whose apophaticism about Being (according to Arendt) requires the philosopher to ignore ontic ethical relationships (that is, relationships between the beings that Being transcends). Consequently, Rubenstein turns to Jean-Luc Nancy, who she reads as outlining an ontology that rejects univocity while retaining an ontic focus. Kotsko (2009: 121) notes that Rubenstein's appeal to Nancy thus illustrates the capacity of his ontology to disrupt typologies which would simply oppose immanentizing (ultimately) univocal ontologies to transcendently oriented (metaxological) metaphysics.

> **While the univocal sense tends to emphasize determinate sameness and identity, the equivocal tends to stress difference that escapes univocal sameness, sometimes even to the point of the loss of any mediation between sameness and difference… By contrast, the dialectical sense seeks to mediate differences… by transition to a more inclusive unity or whole, which… contains and even reconciles the differences. Finally, the metaxological deals with the interplay of sameness and difference… not by mediating a more inclusive whole but by recurrence to the rich ambiguities of the middle…**
>
> (2005: 158)

Framed in these terms, we might wonder whether the model of 'unity' proposed by Francis is less *plurivocal* than *equivocal*, losing sight of unity as such in pursuit of an indiscriminate recognition of difference. What is left is a field of differentiated others, with no intelligible unity. The reason for this is that, as Desmond indicates, in losing sight of unity, the equivocal loses the ability to articulate the opposition of unity-difference that enables difference to appear *as* different. Both terms rendered meaningless, we are then free to throw them about as it suits us. This enables us to make what is ultimately an incoherent claim that things which lie outside the proper unity of the Church are nevertheless 'the same' in this regard, despite their 'difference'.

We can push this potential critique: Ratzinger describes the process of inculturation as one where "a faith stripped of culture is transplanted into a religiously indifferent culture". In short, according to Ratzinger, the idea of inculturation treats cultures and religions as effectively generic or indifferent. He further argues that this is impossible: cultures and religions are "particular", not generic, in such a way as to preclude this transplantation. Consequently, where inculturation appears to have been successful, what has really happened is a process of "inter-culturation", in which one culture has assimilated aspects of the other. This is enabled by each culture sharing features, but the receptive culture nevertheless unavoidably changes in the process (1993: Online). In short, inculturation (according to Ratzinger) presupposes that cultures are effectively indifferent. We can frame this in Desmond's terms by reference to Benedict XVI's critique of "*cultural levelling",* wherein "indiscriminate acceptance" of various cultures erases the "profound significance" found in the elements of those cultures that make them distinct (*Caritas in Veritate*: §26). In short, an equivocal understanding of culture leads to the loss of the distinctions between those cultures, and a false reduction of their differences to a generic sameness.

This association of Desmond and Ratzinger's critiques is particularly pertinent given, as we saw in the last chapter, that inculturation serves as one of the concepts via which Francis articulates his pluralism. Moreover, this critique is sharpened by an apparent tension with Francis' own rejection of 'spherical' universalism that leads to the levelling of culture (*EG* §236).

Furthermore, Desmond argues that politics of equivocity ultimately degenerate into a kind of voluntaristic totalitarianism: when we lose sight of the *determination* of transcendent unity, what replaces it as mediating principle is the will of the individual, before which the world is reduced to indifferent objects of desire (2005: 162). This bears up a further tension with Francis' critique of "idolatry" in *LF* §13, where an object of the will is substituted for the properly transcendent other, thereby negating the lack of control that transcendence represents. In this context, our reading of Francis' ecclesiology seems to erase its very foundation in this alterity.

1.2. A METAXOLOGICAL UNITY

However, this equivocal reading is wrong. As Francis writes in *EG* §131:

> **Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable... Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity.**

In this passage, he recognises the presence of (discomforting social) tensions within a plurivocal Church. He also identifies the impossibility of immanent resolutions, mirroring the critique of equivocity above, as well as more obvious concerns about univocal totalitarianism. Instead, he grounds the unity of the Church in transcendence (the work of the Holy Spirit). This provides the basic outline of his solution, which we will now explore in more substantive terms.

1.2.1. DIALECTICS OR METAXIS?

One reading of this transcendent unity is a *dialectical* one. We might be led to this by a superficial reading of Francis' "four principles" in *EG.* From their introduction, these principles seem to suggest a dialectical synthesis: Francis presents them as able to "guide the development of life in society and the building of a people where differences are harmonized within a shared pursuit" (*EG* §221). This 'harmonization' could be read as indicating the mediation in which differences are 'contained' or 'reconciled', as is characteristic of dialectic

thought as portrayed by Desmond. More specifically, Francis' two principles which deal specifically with difference – the second, "*Unity prevails over conflict"* (*EG* §226); and the fourth, "*The whole is greater than the part"* (*EG* §234) also seem to read in this way. With regards to the former, this seeks "resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides" (*EG* §228). Similarly, with regards to the latter, Francis navigates the tension between the global and the local by reference to a "polyhedral" model, in which distinct locales are incorporated like faces into a multifaceted global polyhedron. The polyhedron, for Francis, exhibits a "convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness", in which the whole both sustains but also exceeds the sum of its components (*EG* §236).

However, this is an over-simplification. It is true that Francis is a 'dialectical' theologian in a sense. Borghesi, via an 'author-centered' reading, reads in Francis the influence of "dialectical" theologians such as Pryzwara, de Lubac, Fessard, Ferré, and Guardini. In line with the above reading of his fourth principle, he notes that the dialectics they present – and thus the dialectics Francis presents – refuse to resolve their 'tensions', instead maintaining each pole simultaneously. This is particularly the case with Guardini, who conceives of human psychology as operating in the tensions between a set of cognitive "polar pairs", which he finds Francis "reduces to" three of the four 'principles' of *EG* (2018: 108; see *EG* §221-237).

However, Borghesi also notes that Francis' third principle, "realities are greater than ideas" (see *EG* §231-233), does not derive from Guardini's polar pairs. This principle also represents a dialectical tension for Francis – between the *determining* and *totalising* 'ideal', through which we engage with reality; and reality itself, which transcends the ideal. This serves to introduce a realist dimension to his dialectics (2018: 117).

In a similar vein, we might say that this principle underlines a distinction between Francis' 'Guardinian' dialectics and his metaphysics. Francis' principles are presented as a kind of analytic framework: they "derive from the pillars of the Church's social doctrine", which Francis describes as "primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena" (*EG* §221; see *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* §161). That is, they are *cognitive*, and perhaps (depending on our interpretation of "derive") *transcendental*. Consequently, the unresolvable tensions of unity and conflict, whole and part, must be understood as belonging to the *ideal* pole of the ideas-reality dialectic.

In this context, we must also read the images of the 'higher plane' and the 'polyhedron' as *ideal* figures. These images point beyond the unresolved polarity of their respective dialectics, to their (non-reductive, tensioned) unity. That is, they are transcendental figures representing the (tensioned) unity of poles that serves as the condition of their respective dialectics, and orients the thought of their respective principles. Being transcendental, these figures must themselves be understood as belonging to the ideal pole of the ideas-reality dialectic, oriented towards, and derivative of, a reality which nevertheless is wholly transcendent of them, and thus cannot be reduced to (or *determined* by) them.

In short, the unity of Francis' "higher plane", or the universality of his "polyhedron" is not a function of the relationship between their components, but rather is a reflection of a transcendent unity or universality that stands in excess of immanent determinations, including all unities together but without reducing difference away. The "higher plane" of resolution only is a resolution because *real* (transcendent) unity transcends and reconciles our ideas of unity and conflict, unifying all distinct 'sides' specifically *as* distinct 'sides'. The "polyhedron" is universal because *real* universality includes what is both local and global, including all localities in a global context specifically *as* localities.[125]

Francis' metaphysics of unity is thus what Desmond would describe as "metaxological". For Desmond, a metaxological picture of the world arises from its situation in the "middle", between immanent plurality and transcendent unity. Without ever fully transcending immanence (and thus reducing away plurality to unity), it recognises the grounding of immanent plurality in a unity that nevertheless "exceeds determination in terms of immanence alone". This transcendent unity provides an "ontological robustness" to immanent alterity, while in itself being properly transcendent of that alterity, manifesting an

[125] In chapter three, we associated the 'fullness' of *touch* with the absolute horizon of thematic knowledge. However, here we have associated the poles of this dialectic with the ideal – which is to say, *sight.* This tension resolves itself when we read it in light of Francis' third principle itself: this dialectic bears within itself the tension between the 'ideal' and the 'real'. Because it is ultimately a thematised dialectic ("some object [time] is some relation [greater] than some object [space]"), the poles it establishes are ultimately poles that present themselves to *sight.* What this dialectic thus illustrates is that there is always a tension *of which* sight *is aware* between what it has achieved, and what lies beyond its horizons. This by itself says nothing about the way those horizons intersect with the distinction between 'ideality' and 'reality'.

In fact, the relationship between *sight* and 'reality' (as we have read it) is only established via Francis' description of *touch* and his association of it with 'fullness', along with his further association of 'fullness' with 'reality'. But this is not, strictly speaking, part of the formulation of the dialectic itself - even if it can be read (as we have) in terms of that dialectic.

"even more radical otherness" that prevents its reduction to immanent *determinations* (2005: 160).

Put more simply, a metaxological metaphysics affirms the reality of difference by affirming *both* difference and unity. It is able to do so because it locates the relationship between (the unity of) the two principles in a transcendence that lies beyond either, and thus is reducible to neither. Because the relationship (the unity) between the two principles is transcendent, it cannot be reduced to an immanent unity. This means that we cannot *determine* it by *totalising* an immanent model of unity, reducing away difference beneath this *determination.* This enables *plurivocity* within immanent unities; real difference between distinct particulars that are nevertheless unified.

1.2.2. METAXIS, MYSTICISM AND ECCLESIOLOGY

This metaxological metaphysics enables us to read the ecclesiology of the last chapter through the epistemology of chapter three. Analogously to how our thematic knowledge of God is conditioned by horizons that preclude its *totalization,* so too are our notions of ecclesial unity. Firstly, we noted in chapter three that God's transcendence precludes reduction to immanent (thematic) *determinations.* Similarly, the unity of the Church also precludes such reductive *determination.* Secondly, just as our thematic knowledge is conditioned by a quantitative horizon, there is no *absolute* idea of unity to which the unity of the Church necessarily conforms, or which cannot be unsettled by the *real* unity that unveils itself over time in the life of the Church. Thus our notion of Church unity must be ever-expanding, always seeking to incorporate the novel expressions of the reality of this unity. Francis expresses this succinctly when he writes: "She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary" (*EG* §111).

So what, then, *is* this transcendent reality from which the unity of the Church derives? We saw how *LF* answers these questions in the previous chapter: Francis writes that "[t]he unity of the Church in time and space is linked to the unity of the faith" (*LF* §40). That is, it derives from its unity as the collective Christian subject; specifically its formal, efficient, and final unity, which lies in its relation to the mystical object of its faith. It is from the efficient and final unity of this subjectivity that its transcendence derives: "Faith is 'one'… because of the oneness of the God who is known and confessed. All the articles of faith speak of God; they are ways to know him and his works". Francis develops this along the lines that we have been following above when he continues to write that "[c]onsequently, their unity is far

superior to any possible construct of human reason" (*LF* §40). In short, the knowledge disclosed by this subjectivity is that of a reality which transcends our ideas of that reality. Here we return to the epistemology of *LF:* because our thematic knowledge (*sight*) of God is subject to the horizons of *hearing,* so to is our *sight* of Christian subjectivity as the disclosure of God.

To put it more simply, Christian subjectivity is a matter of knowledge of the transcendent.[126] Proportional to its object, the scope of that knowledge has the capacity for similar transcendence, meaning that what can fall within the scope of that subjectivity cannot be *determined* from the outset. Consequently, the nature of that subjectivity itself, conceived in terms of what it encompasses, resists *determination*. Put more concretely (for example), even though the articles of faith have the capacity to encompass and assimilate everything the faith encounters (*LF* §48), this assimilation is to a transcendent unity which thus has the capacity to upset our *determinations* of what that assimilation will look like. In turn, this means that our understanding of those articles themselves, as that-which-assimilates (i.e. in terms of what they can mean with regards to the world), is similarly *indeterminate*.

This then leads to the *indeterminacy* of its formal unity – that is, that it is ultimately constituted by the same vocation or intensionality, or a being "directed to the one Lord, to the life of Jesus, to the concrete history which he shares with us" (*LF* §40). Because this knowledge is disclosed in the amorous economy of *touch,* which is to say, encounter, it is bound to the media for this *touch.* In other words, it is bound to the elements of the context for the encounter, in which the encounter takes place. This means that this unity of intensionality must encompass within it all the various *forms* through which this intension is sustained. This too is potentially a site of transcendence, and certainly a site of indeterminacy, corresponding to the range of possibilities for this encounter. Thus our recognition of this unity (which we discussed in the previous chapter in terms of our expression of it in 'Petrine' forms and structures) must follow the mystical reality of that life.

1.2.3. Inconsistency and paradox

In summary, Francis' epistemology in chapter three establishes a model of faith-knowledge which is fundamentally *indeterminate.* His Marian priority, read through a metaxological metaphysics, enables Francis to construe the unity of the Church in these terms. This enables him to authentically 'think' difference within unity, thereby incorporating the possible

[126] Over the *determinations* of *sight*

variation in form argued for in the last chapter within a Church that is nevertheless still meaningfully 'unified'.

Nevertheless, there is a qualification to our capacity to 'think' unity here: because there is no ideal unity under which immanent unities can be consistently *determined,* the unity that we must think is an inconsistent one. This inconsistency manifests as *paradox*. Milbank illustrates this with the analogy of a misty riverbank, as seen from a car travelling along it. On the one hand, distinct objects stand out all the more starkly as objects against the background of the mist – the equivocal, emerging from a transcendental univocity. On the other, the uniform blanket of the mist impresses itself all the more firmly upon the viewer in the way it contrasts with the objects framed within it – the univocal, emerging from a transcendental equivocity (2009: 160-1).

The term "paradox" is useful here insofar as paradoxes need not be vicious, even though they do not accommodate themselves to thought. As with the misty vista, where the paradoxical interplay of univocal cloud and equivocal bodies requires us to recognise both the real and irreducible unity of the scene while also recognising the reality and irreducibility of the objects within it, so the paradoxical interplay of identity and diversity in Francis' ecclesiology requires us to recognise both the real and irreducible difference of groups within the Church, while also recognising the real and irreducible unity between them.

Furthermore, to extend the analogy, there is a unity to both the mist and the objects within it: 'the riverbank'. However, from our vantage point travelling through it, there is nothing within our sight that would tell us this: surrounded on all sides by mist and trees, we might think it extends endlessly beyond us. This unity transcends what we can see from our window. Similarly, the distinction between worldly and transcendent unity is a distinction between the ideal and the real; here shown to be what is conceived, and what is ultimately *inconceivable*.

Moreover, as we progress into this unforeseen transcendence by rounding the next corner, we may be surprised by some object wholly unheralded by previous encounters, (yet still) irrupting from the mist. Similarly, the transcendence of the unity of unity and difference means that it possesses the capacity to rupture ideas and preconceptions of unity: we might find that unity and difference are related in such a way as to allow unforeseen and unexpected combinations, defying *determination* according to our preconceived ideas of unity.

Indeed, just as any complete description of the riverbank must include the capacity of the mist to surprise us, our ideas of unity, if properly directed towards reality, must always indicate their *inabsoluteness* and *non-totality*. As a result, for Francis, when we talk about unity, we can only do so in awareness that *true* unity cannot be reduced to any particular idea of unity that we may have.

We can restate this explicitly in the language of the two horizons. The tension between the ideal and the real can be read as a reflection of the tension between our thematic knowledge, in which the world is 'conceptualised', and the transcendent reality of the divine on the other. Just as the absolute horizon of thematic knowledge in general means that there is both a qualitative horizon to that knowledge, and also a quantitative incompleteness to it, there is a limit to our ability to thematise the unity of the Church specifically. In this context, the 'tension' of the paradox can be understood as a 'running up against' those horizons.[127]

1.2.4. PARADOX AND INDIFFERENCE

This also enables us to tie up the loose thread that is the question of indifference, and the related issue of inculturation. In Milbank's valley, the figures which emerge from the mist have unity, even as they differ. Similarly, while Francis' notion of unity is *indeterminate,* he nevertheless *has* a notion of unity. He does not endorse an equivocal model of the Church.

This in turn means that he does not necessarily treat the various cultures in which the faith is inculturated as generic. For Francis, as we have seen, faith is ultimately a response to an encounter. Moreover, the encounter from which faith is born can occur within an *indeterminate* range of forms. This means that a culture's capacity to acquire faith is not contingent upon its acquisition of a *determinate* set of forms. Of course, Francis identifies four 'storehouses' of the Church's memory, but we also noted that he does not restrict memory to these four forms. This in turn means that a culture does not need to receive a particular set of forms in order to acquire faith. It could also (hypothetically) encounter God within its own set of forms. In such a case, there is no transplanting of forms such that the cultures must be treated as generic. But nor is there a transplanting of faith: the new faith of the culture is linked inseparably to its particular theophanic forms. Faith and culture maintain their "particularity", and faith cannot be considered as an "abstraction" (Ratzinger, 1993: Online). If there is anything generic or abstract, it is the *idea of '*an encounter' (that is, not

[127] We will return to this theme of tension in our next chapter, in the course of our discussion of comedy.

the encounters themselves), by which faith and form are united in their particular unities. But all this is to say that there is some overarching descriptive category which obtains here.[128]

This descriptive genericity is enabled by the *indeterminacy* of Christian unity. What it expresses is that the real unity of the Church falls across apparent or ideal distinctions. This, however, does not negate these distinctions – as Francis' third principle reminds us, our relationship to reality is a tensioned one, where reality is one pole of an ideal dialectic that also incorporates the ideal register itself in which these distinctions manifest. In other words, we cannot help but 'think' them.

2. The critical challenge of Marian priority

To summarise: for Francis, the unity of the Church is a function of a shared encounter with God. This encounter takes place through a range of distinct cultural forms, giving a paradoxical plurivocity to the unity of the Church. These forms, while different, can nevertheless be read as meaningfully unified. This is because the relationship between (that is, the unity between) unity and difference as such is a function of a transcendent reality, and thus does not reduce to (immanent) ideas of unity by which differences might be excluded in thought. To put it differently, there is no *idea* of unity which can be adequately *totalised* such that it can *determine* the unity of the Church.

We can restate this in terms of Francis' Marian priority in order to frame it in a more concrete, ecclesial sense. There is a Marian dynamic at the heart of our conceptions of

[128] Of course, the question of whether such inculturation, as opposed to inter-culturality, has ever happened is an entirely different one. This question must be approached carefully in light of the violent colonialism that has facilitated the globalisation of Christianity, not in the least because narratives of inculturation, which emphasise the integrity of evangelised cultures, can obscure histories of violent transformation. For example, (the historical individual) Francis' emphasis on inculturation can be read as part of an apologetic against the damning 'black legend' of Spanish colonialism in South America. Against this, Francis venerates the Jesuit *reducciones* as an example of inculturating evangelism; an ethical origin for Catholic identity in Argentina, which in turn grants an inherited value to that identity (Rourke, 2016b: 38-40). However, Crocitti recognises that the *reducciones* involved the imposition of an alien regime involving economic exploitation and disciplinary violence (2002: 11-12). This indicates a more troubling legacy, which is obscured by narratives of inculturation.

That said, perhaps even more worrying is the ease with which Ratzinger talks about the "healing pass-over of a culture" in which "[o]nly appearing to die, the culture actually rises, coming fully into its own for the first time". This image is premised upon the idea that all cultures arise from a "universal human disposition for the truth", and are therefore fulfilled when they are shaped by Christian truth, which he uses to dispute the idea that cultural evangelism is violence at all, instead characterising it as an exchange that "leads [the colonised culture] to its own center" and "redemption" (1993: Online). A critical reader would claim here that he merely tries to excuse colonial violence by portraying it as sanctifying. In this vein, although a theory of inter-culturality can help us to recognise violent transformations of culture, it also has the potential to baptize it.

ecclesial unity, which must thus follow the continued expression of that mystery in diverse and novel historical contexts. We must therefore recognise the transcendence of that mystical unity over our (immanent) ideas of unity, and its capacity to unsettle them.

Von Balthasar, from whom we drew our Marian-Petrine terminology, links the Marian to martyrdom. For von Balthasar, the Marian Church is defined by its openness to revelation, and obedience to it. Its paradigmatic action is the Marian *fiat*, with its "truly *unlimited* availability" that freely consents to the infinite mystery and demand of the divine. Just as Mary's fiat allowed her to give birth to Christ, the Marian Church by its *fiat* anticipates the redemption offered by God, opening the present to in "*infiniti capax"* to respond to grace (von Balthasar, 1986: 206-7). This is most fully realised in "the *Ernstfall* [decisive moment]", in which the total sacrifice of one's being in a response to God's love is made (Balthasar, 1969: 37).

In chapter three, we identified a key distinction between Francis' vision and that of *Veritatis Splendor:* each operates under what might be described as aesthetics of obedience, expressed most fully in terms of a kind of 'martyrdom'. As we saw, for Francis, martyrdom might be conceived in terms of a surrender of one's capacity over the transcendence of the divine. Thus the acme of the moral life is an 'unselfing' refusal to assert oneself as knower over what is properly transcendent.

Just as for von Balthasar, Francis' Marian priority thus demands an obedience, which is expressed in the 'martyrdom' of 'unselfing' before transcendence. Read in the context of his ecclesiology, as mediated by his epistemology, one instance of this transcendence is the true unity of the Church. This provides the basis for a critical response to the paranoid ecclesiology in *VS.* As we saw, for *VS,* martyrdom expresses the ultimate surrender of one's will before the demands of the law, which is unilaterally mediated by the historical teachings of the Magisterium. Thus acme of the moral life is found in an 'unquestioning' obedience to those teachings. This obedience involves staying within the bounds of the unity of the Christian life as laid out by those teachings. Hence it also involves a recognition of an *absolute, total, determining* model of that unity, which is precluded by 'unselfing'.

2.1. GNOSTICISM

Francis makes something like this critique in his analysis of modern "gnosticism"[129] in *Gaudete et Exsultate.* Gnosticism offers the false consolation of a model of faith that "can appear to possess a certain harmony or order that encompasses everything" (*GE* §38). It invokes the illusion that we possess "explanations [that] can make the entirety of the faith and the Gospel perfectly comprehensible". This belief leads gnostics to "absolutize their own theories and force others to submit to their way of thinking" (*GE* §39).

Francis condemns this as "an anthropocentric immanentism disguised as Catholic truth". At its heart is the attempt to supplant "mystery and grace" with human "power" (*GE* §48); a "false holiness" (*GE* §35) that refuses the 'unselfing' necessary to the Christian life. Instead, it seeks to *totalise* our (thematic) knowledge, enabling the *determination* of the transcendent according to that knowledge, thereby subverting the Marian priority proper to the Church.

Ultimately, *VS* is not a gnostic document, because it lacks the fundamental motivation of contemporary gnosticism to measure holiness by our capacity to "understand the complexity of certain doctrines" (*GE* §37). In contrast, as we saw previously, for *VS,* holiness is a matter of obedience to the pronouncements of the Magisterium. Similarly, the immanentism of gnosticism is "inherently anthropocentric", substituting God and the Other for a fundamentally subjective consolation of a false certainty (Barrett, 2018: 120). In contrast, while we might argue that *VS* provides this sense of certainty, it nevertheless does so through adopting a transcendent orientation that cannot simply be dismissed as subjectivism. However, for *VS,* this orientation is nevertheless one wholly *determined* according to a *totalised* set of particular historical (i.e. immanent) mediations. As such, there is a parallel between gnostic *determination* by *totalisation*, and the paranoid hermeneutics of *VS*. In this vein, Francis recognises in gnosticism the reflexive totality that we have identified with paranoid hermeneutics: because it "considers its own vision of reality to be perfect", it "feeds on itself and becomes even more myopic" (*GE* §40).

Against this, Francis' Marian priority reminds us that the transcendence of the divine stands over our capacity as knowers, rupturing this *totality* and thereby manifesting *indeterminacy*. Thus Francis opposes gnostic *totalisation* to the non-*totality* and *indeterminacy* which is associated with true transcendence: the gnostic "wants everything to be clear and sure

[129] We ought to read this as 'gnosticism' in the sense of its having "general common features" with the ancient heresy, rather in terms of direct equivalence (CDF, 2018: §3).

presumes to control God's transcendence". However, "God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises". As a result, "[w]e are not the ones to determine when and how we will encounter him" (*GE* §41). This criticism thus obtains with regards to paranoid hermeneutics in theology, even if they are not strictly gnostic.

The danger of *VS,* then, is that it establishes the same kind of dangerous *totalization* and *determination* with regards to the unity of the Church. Moreover, there is a further crucial parallel between *VS* and contemporary gnosticism. Whereas gnosticism asserts the self as knower over the transcendence of the divine, *VS* might be described as invoking a kind of 'institutional gnosticism', asserting the historical Magisterium as the operator of thematic knowledge. Although this institutional focus means that the individual is no longer central to this relationship, this still disrupts the proper ordering of thematic and mystical knowledge, and thus asserts the immanent over and against the transcendent. It is just that, rather than asserting individual knowers over and against mystery, it asserts the Petrine over and against the Marian.

2.2. ALTERITY AND TOTALIZATION

This contrast is played out with regards to alterity. Francis places alterity at the heart of his ecclesiology. He does so in four ways, which we saw in the previous chapter: firstly, evangelism takes place in the encounter with others. As such, alterity is a *condition* of the Church. Secondly, because of this, the Church's mission is ultimately one directed towards alterity. In other words, alterity is the *end* of the Church. Thirdly, Francis recognises the dependence of the Church on the world for the forms in which people encounter God. Because the cultures which supply these forms are plural, the Church itself is plurivocal. In other words, alterity is an inescapable *feature* of the Church. Finally alterity within the Church can be conceived of as an expression of plenitudinous divinity, and an opportunity for faith. As such, alterity becomes associated with the *good* of the Church.

Furthermore, this openness to alterity is itself a mode of the 'unselfing' which Francis recognises as the acme of Christian life. Gruber argues that *EG*'s focus on outreach in evangelization and pastoral practices situates the Church within the world, thereby identifying the world as its theological locus. In doing so, Francis enacts a kind of "kenosis", wherein the Church surrenders any false claims to docetic ahistoricity, and instead comes to embody the message of Christ in its original incarnational medium. In doing so, it recognises that revelation "can never be safely contained in the teachings of the church", and that "[o]nly by getting lost in the world can the Church get a grasp on revelation" (Gruber, 2017b:

69). Thus Francis is lead to a model of the Church which "does not allow for clear-cut definitions of church and world, but makes for blurred, leaking, and shifting borders between them" (2017b: 70). Even as the Church professes revelation, it does so from within history. For Francis, to embrace alterity as the condition of this profession is to embrace the immanence of the Church, and the transcendence of the divine over it. Thus, as Francis puts it in *GE,* we cannot "claim to say where God is not, because God is mysteriously present in the life of every person, in a way that he himself chooses, and we cannot exclude this by our presumed certainties". This means that true discernment, which is "guided by the Spirit" and not pretensions to a *total* knowledge, "can and must try to find the Lord in every human life" (*GE* §21).

In contrast, *VS* was written as part of a defensive reaction against an epistemological crisis in moral theology. Its purpose was to reaffirm the boundaries of the discipline, and to criticise violations of those boundaries. We might describe this by way of an image: circling the wagons. This manoeuvre establishes a defensive perimeter. In doing so, it reconfigures the unity of the group around an 'internal space' that must be defended from threat; a process which itself creates the 'internality' of the defended space, and the 'externality' of the threat. Likewise, *VS* responds to the threat of tradition crisis with a paranoid movement that *determines* moral theology according to a model of *total* obedience to the Magisterium and its metaethics, negating anything which does not fall within the bounds of this determination as 'outside' the Church.

In other words, *VS* identifies *indeterminacy* with alterity, and its foreclosure of the former is performed by way of rejection of its embodiment in the latter. Firstly, it rejects the theologies that transgress the boundaries it sets out – the known threats anticipated and identified as such by the paranoid hermeneutic. Secondly, and more radically, it rejects the alterity represented by the negativity at the heart of the tradition crisis itself; the bad surprise of a threat that overturns the hermeneutic.

This denial of historicity and plurivocity further aligns *VS* with contemporary gnosticism, and opens it up to critiques of the latter. Francis contrasts gnostic 'virtue' with the true seat of holiness in charity, which is oriented towards the historical encounter with others. Gnostics "think of the intellect as separate from the flesh, and thus become incapable of touching Christ's suffering flesh in others", instead being concerned with "abstractions" (*GE* §37).

This enables gnosticism to negate historicity and its plurality – a negation which Francis juxtaposes against the "concrete simplicity" of the Gospel. He associates this concreteness with pluralism, and opposes both to gnostic unity, writing that "some currents of Gnosticism scorned the concrete simplicity of the Gospel and attempted to replace the trinitarian and incarnate God with a superior Unity" (*GE* §43). This association is elucidated further in the next passage, which notes that

> **In effect, doctrine, or better, our understanding and expression of it, "is not a closed system… The questions of our people, their suffering, their struggles, their dreams, their trials and their worries, all possess an interpretational value that we cannot ignore if we want to take the principle of the incarnation seriously…"**
>
> (*GE* §44)[130]

In this context, the concreteness of the gospel refers to the role historical context plays in its interpretation. The historical pluralism of the Church implies multiple sites of interpretation. In contrast, Gnosticism rejects the historical in favour of the ideal, simultaneously negating this pluralism.

We noted previously that *VS* is not, ultimately, a gnostic document. Nevertheless, there is a parallel here between the negation of history as a site of indeterminacy in gnosticism, and the paranoid *totalization* of an idea of unity in *VS,* which precludes the historical irruption of difference within the unity of the Church as conceived by Francis. Francis recognises history as a site of *indeterminacy* which can disrupt the *totality* of our ideas of unity, indicating the transcendence of the reality of the unity of the Church over them. In contrast, both *VS* and gnosticism *totalise* an ideal unity, and negate history as a site of this *indeterminacy*.

Thus Francis challenges both gnosticism and paranoia when he writes that "in the Church there legitimately coexist different ways of interpreting many aspects of doctrine and Christian life" (*GE* §43). Similarly to how we saw previously, he contextualises this in terms of mystery, writing that it "is not easy to grasp the truth that we have received from the Lord. And it is even more difficult to express it. So we cannot claim that our way of understanding this truth authorizes us to exercise a strict supervision over others' lives" (*GE* §43) That is, recognising the legitimate plurivocity of the Church is part of recognising the transcendence

[130] Francis quotes his *Video Message to Participants in an International Theological Congress held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina (1-3 September 2015)* (2015e: Online) here. In this context, we are reading "interpretation" in terms of "understanding and expression". Following our last chapter, we are reading these in terms of *credere in Deum,* rather than *credere Deum.*

of the truth that it seeks to express over the particular forms within it. Gnosticism, in seeking to *totalize* an ideal notion of unity in order to create a monolithic vision of the Church, asserts the ideal over a mystery that transcends it. The same can be said for paranoia.

3. Conclusion: the challenge of unselfing

In short, both *LF* and *VS* are ultimately concerned with living before the truth. They share the fundamental premise that the Christian life is one of obedience before the transcendence of the truth. However, *LF* recognises that this transcendence is not only over the will, such that this recognition expresses itself in an unquestioning obedience to a unilateral authority, but is also over knowledge. Consequently, it has a capacity to unsettle us, to the point that this obedience requires a surrendering of *determination* and *totality* in knowledge. In this chapter, we have argued that the unity of the Church enjoys this transcendence, and this *indeterminacy* can be embodied in alterity. Because we cannot occupy a position whereby the limits of this unity can be *determined,* there is always the possibility of an alterity arising within it that subverts our conceptions of that unity. Thus we must surrender claims to *determination, totality,* and *absoluteness* in our conceptions of the unity of the Church. However, as we have argued in the previous chapter, we can nevertheless embrace these limitations with hope – that is, with positive affect. In this way, Francis lays the ground for an ecclesiology which approaches difference reparatively.

This critique is doubtless controversial, not least because it *is a critique* of a document that has been afforded authority within the recent tradition. The issue of how to approach it alongside our commitments to paranoid documents such as *VS* as part of the tradition is an important one. If apt, it requires us to reconsider how we view *VS*. Alternatively, perhaps their possibility indicates a dangerous trajectory in Francis' teachings which needs to be corrected. On this point, there is much discussion about the continuity of Francis' teachings and the tradition immediately prior to him, and the topic lies beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is worth noting how this critique adds to this debate.

Firstly, it is worth reiterating that both Francis as we have read him and *VS* agree in fundamental ways. Although we have identified fundamental differences, they share a common insight into the primacy of truth in theology, and a common 'obediential' sensibility – even if they disagree on what precisely constitutes this obedience. As such, we are not faced wholly with an 'either-or' decision between the two.

Secondly, part of this critique has been the argument that *VS* (as we have read it) pushes the Magisterium beyond its proper bounds so as to reverse the proper relationship between the Marian and the Petrine. This raises further questions about the position of *VS* in the tradition as such, which destabilizes the 'easy' resolution of accepting or rejecting Francis based on perceived continuity or discontinuity with those documents.

Thirdly, at the heart of our critique is the issue of the proper relationship between the Church and mystery, and the capacities of its institutions to 'know' that mystery in certain senses. The past two chapters have shown how Francis frames this issue epistemologically and ecclesiologically, and in doing so have integrated our critique into this wider field of systematic considerations. As such, it cannot be addressed in a purely doctrinal register.

We ought to also recognise the corresponding challenge that *VS,* and indeed the wider paranoid tradition, presents to Francis. As we saw previously, *VS* was written in response to a tradition crisis in moral theology, in which the canons of rationality which previously *determined* the discipline were disrupted. The result of this was the gradual fragmentation of the discipline, with no universal measure of success available to reorient inquiry. In this context, the encyclical's rejection of alterity and the *indeterminacy* it embodies is one rooted in a recognition of very real dangers, including *radical* danger. In this context, we ought to ask: does Francis' stance towards alterity and *indeterminacy* include the *radical* alterity and *indeterminacy* that *VS* ultimately seeks to foreclose? And if so, how does he contend with the very real danger involved, as embodied in the tradition crisis that ultimately motivated *VS*?

On this point, something conspicuously absent in this thesis so far is a treatment of doctrinal issues in truth. In the last chapter, we saw how the unity of the Church can incorporate variations in doctrinal form. However, we explicitly treated this variation as an issue of *credere in Deum,* rather than *credere Deum.* Moreover, in our third chapter, we discussed how Francis' epistemology places conditions of *indeterminacy, non-totality* and *inabsoluteness* upon our thematic knowledge. This would seem to apply to doctrine. Furthermore, in this chapter, we have resurrected this theme, but only in the limited context of conceptions of ecclesial unity. This omission skates over a tension in our reading of Francis, between his critique of paranoid *determination* and *totalization,* and his dogmatic commitments. Near the beginning of the chapter, we noted a fundamental contrast between Francis and Buber in that the latter refuses dogma as an immanentizing reduction of God from *Thou* to *it* (see Buber, 2013: 78). Along these lines, we might ask: how does Francis

maintain his commitment to both (*indeterminate*) transcendence and (*determinate*) dogma? Can he do so within the terms of this critique? Our next chapter will answer these questions.

VI. THE REPARATIVE COSMOLOGY OF *LAUDATO SI'*

In our third chapter, we read *LF* as outlining an epistemology which serves as the basis for a reparative hermeneutics in Catholic theology. We developed this in order to produce an account of ecclesial unity which opens up the possibility for a reparative hermeneutics of alterity within the Church.

This epistemology understands knowledge as arising from an encounter with God as Other. This encounter gives rise to knowledge in a primordial, unthematic register, which Francis refers to as *touch.* This then provides the basis for reflective, thematic knowledge which Francis refers to as *sight.* In this encounter, God's alterity manifests as a transcendence over thematic knowledge. As a result, *sight* is bounded by two horizons: firstly, a qualitative horizon, which denotes the limits of thematicity as such before the reality of this encounter. Secondly, a quantitative horizon, denotes the expansion of *sight* into the field of *touch.* Francis illustrates this boundedness of knowledge by way of the metaphor of *hearing.*

The condition of *hearing* provides the basis for a reparative hermeneutics by thwarting the *totalisation* and *absolutisation* of*,* and the *determination* of the world by, thematic knowledge. Firstly, the presence of horizons indicates that thematic knowledge is never *total.* Similarly, because it is a function of unthematic *touch,* it can never be absolute, but rather is always relative to the encounter. This opens up the possibility of its being unsettled. Finally, because *sight* is neither total nor absolute, there is always the possibility of *indeterminacy* before it.

To illustrate this dynamic, chapter three looked to the example of mercy in *Amoris Laetitia*. We argued that mercy, for Francis, is the complement of justice in the field of *sight. Touch,* which transcends *sight,* and therefore any specific set of *determinations* by it, mediates the relationship between the two, enabling the *determinations* of justice to be superseded by those of mercy. In chapters four and five, we looked to how the unity of the Church transcends the *determinations* of any specific ideas of unity.

Chapter four moved from this to explore Francis' ecclesiology in light of his emphasis on evangelization. We argued that, for Francis, the form and structures of the Church properly conceived are relative goods to that of this encounter. This enables pluralism in matters of

credere in Deum,[131] corresponding to the amount of authentic variation in the conditions in which this encounter takes place.

In chapter five, we then looked to how Francis conceives of unity in this context, returning to the epistemology of chapter three in order to articulate an analogous conception of ecclesial unity, which incorporates and sustains the difference and alterity made possible by his ecclesiology. In short, chapter five argued that Francis conceives of the unity of the Church as a function of a transcendent unity which cannot be reduced away through *determination* by any specific idea of unity. This is because it is directed towards the transcendent reality of God, and thus possesses within itself the capacity to disclose transcendence in knowledge, first, as unthematic, primordial *touch;* and then partially as reflective, thematic *sight*. That is, the scope of this subjectivity corresponds to the transcendence of its object. The upshot of this is that, just as the reality of God transcends our ideas of God, the reality of this scope transcends our ideas of it. As a result, just as the transcendence of God means that our thematic knowledge of God is always conditioned by the horizons of *hearing,* and therefore subject to *indeterminacy,* non-*totality,* and *relativity,* so too are our ideas of ecclesial unity.

Throughout these chapters, our discussion of this subjectivity has been limited to its knowledge of our own relationship to God. Chapter three spoke about it in abstract terms, but then illustrated it in relation to the logic of mercy; chapter four then set it aside to focus on the relationship between encounter and ecclesial structures; and chapter five only returned to it in order to talk about the role of that knowledge in relation to the form of Christian subjectivity. This means that a major question has been left hanging: to what extent does Francis' epistemology hold in the context of knowledge of things beyond one's personal encounter with God? This leads to the further question: to what extent does our thematic knowledge in general manifest the accompanying *indeterminacy,* non-*totality,* and *relativity*?

This chapter seeks to answer this question. It does so by looking to *Laudato Si'*.[132] *LS* presents a vision of the cosmos in which the relationship between humans, other creatures, and God are central organising features. Francis states that the creation accounts in the book of Genesis "suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself". In this context, sin is

[131] Relational, trusting belief 'in' God.
[132] Hereafter, *LS*

the "rupture" of these relationships, which arose through our "presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations" (*LS* §66).

This establishes a basic relational context for understanding creation, which Francis elaborates upon throughout the encyclical. These relationships are understood to be interrelated: Francis cites the story of Cain and Abel, wherein Cain is "cursed from the ground" for murdering his brother, as showing how "[d]isregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God, and with the earth" (*LS* §66).[133] Pertinent to our thesis are two broad dynamics of relation: firstly, ontic relations between creatures; and secondly, metaphysical ones between creatures and God, into which other creatures are incorporated. Both of these have implications for extending the epistemology of *LF* to cover wider knowledge.

We will start with ontic relations (i.e. relations between creatures). In section 1, we will argue that *LS* establishes a '*relational* ontology' that construes our knowledge of other creatures primarily in terms of encounter, as seen in chapter three. We will continue to argue that this can be read as being underpinned by a Thomist[134] metaphysics of analogy, in which the nature of the world is analogous to the divine nature: for Francis, the life of the Trinity shows God's nature to be one of *encounter*, and creation resembles God in this specific form of relationality. We will then anticipate the charge that Francis offers a 'social Trinitarianism', problematised by Kilby (2000) and Tonstad (2016). We will argue that he actually presents a

[133] In this vein, Biviano (2017) identifies "social love" as a key virtue for ecological responsibility in *LS.* Similarly, Dávila (2017) argues that the concern for the environment in *LS* cannot be separated out from, but rather must be read through (without reducing it to), its concern for the poor.

[134] It is worth saying something about our appropriation of Aquinas here. This thesis employs a 'reader-centered' hermeneutic which aims to construct the meaning of Francis' texts through the process of appropriation, rather than 'uncovering' some original authorial intention, or using it as a proxy to pose questions to the author. The strength of Thomas in this context is that, under certain readings, he presents a metaphysics that is both illuminative of Francis in this instance, and also already integrated into the tradition in a broad fashion. My use of "broad" is deliberate: as Kerr notes, contemporary readings of Aquinas "are so conflicting, and even incommensurable, that integrating them into a single interpretation seems impossible" (2002: 15-16). Thus it is hard to claim that any one reading of Aquinas is to be identified with the tradition specifically. Nevertheless, the fact that the (multivocal, ambiguous) figure of Thomas is one that is incorporated within 'the Tradition' means that the illumination he provides is broadly intelligible, and therefore receivable, in a more-or-less uncontroversially Catholic context. This facilitates the appropriation of Francis' texts in our reading.

To this end, our reading of Thomas is at the service of our reading of Francis, rather than the other way round. We are not, therefore, trying to claim that Francis possesses an authoritative 'Thomist' identity. In this context, we will take our reading of Aquinas from Oliver (2017), the strength of Oliver's reading here being that it foregrounds these illuminative features. For a more in-depth discussion of the rationale behind these hermeneutical decisions, see chapter two. We will also return to the question of situating Francis in the tradition in our concluding chapter.

'Trinitarian apophaticism' that actively resists the perils that Kilby associates withattempts at 'Trinitarian' ontologies, as well as one from Surin with regards to analogical metaphysics.

We will then move to metaphysical relations (i.e. relations between creatures and God). In section 2, we will argue that *LS* also portrays creation as a site of encounter with God. We will argue that it does so in a way that renders our knowledge of creation as inextricable from our knowledge of God in this encounter. This in turn means that this knowledge of creation is conditioned by *hearing* as it manifests in that knowledge of God.

Together, these two arguments show how our knowledge of creation in general is bound by the conditions of *hearing.* In doing so, it expands the scope of these conditions to all knowledge, including *credere Deum,*[135] and not merely *credere in Deum.*

1. A *RELATIONAL* ONTOLOGY

Francis construes relationships between creatures in terms which seem to mirror the interpersonal mysticism of *LF.* We will argue that these relationships can be understood as ones of 'encounter' along these lines. This is even the case for relationships with non-person creatures, which analogically resemble encounters with the Other. We can explain this in reference to themes within *LS* that bear out parallels with Aquinas' metaphysics of analogy, which enable us to conceive of this resemblance in terms of an analogical metaphysics wherein the origin of creation in the relational inner life of the Trinity is born out in a resemblance in creatures.

1.1. RELATING TO CREATURES

Francis construes ontic relations in interpersonal terms. Early in the encyclical, Francis identifies a need for an "integral ecology", which goes beyond the "language" of natural science and "takes us to the heart of what it is to be human" (*LS* §11). He sees the life of St Francis of Assisi as exemplifying this approach:

[135] Doctrinal belief 'about' God

> **Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them "to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason"… to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection.**
>
> (*LS* §11)

This passage integrates two significant themes: firstly, that of communion; St. Francis "communed with all creation". Secondly, that of interpersonality, attributed to this communion by the analogy between St. Francis' gaze upon other creatures and that of the lover upon the beloved; as well as specifying that St. Francis directly addressed flowers, and considered creatures as siblings.

In a similar vein, Francis notes that "the laws found in the Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings" (*LS* §69). Likewise, Francis sees in human nature the presupposition of the possibility of encounter with creation. He writes that humans possess among all creation "their own personal identity" and capacity to enter "into dialogue" not only "with God himself", but also "with others" (*LS* §81).

Francis sees even our basic physical existence as one of relation to creatures. He writes that embodiment as inextricable from encounter and relation with Others and the natural world, as it "establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings". This is, at least in part, because our bodily existence is one constitutive dimension of our identity in relation - as Francis implies when he writes that "valuing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different" (*LS* §155).

Finally, Francis calls for an "ecological conversion", in which the changes involved lead to "a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness" (*LS* §220). The term, "tenderness" has interpersonal connotations. In *Amoris Laetitia,* Francis praises tenderness as a virtue which exhibits the law of love (*AL* §27). He illustrates this virtue by way of the image of "a babe sleeping in his mother's arms after being nursed", in "a closeness that is conscious and not simply biological" (*AL* §28). He develops this when he writes:

> **Tenderness… is a sign of a love free of selfish possessiveness. It makes us approach a person with immense respect and a certain dread of causing them harm or taking**

away their freedom. Loving another person involves the joy of contemplating and appreciating their innate beauty and sacredness, which is greater than my needs.

(*AL* §127)

In our third chapter, we followed Abrams in noting that Francis' ethic of obedience is one of "unselfing" before the Other (2017: 156). Tenderness expresses this ethic of unselfing, hence Francis' next line is the one which Oltvai (2018: 318) uses to define the loving economy of *encounter:* "The aesthetic experience of love is expressed in that "gaze" which contemplates other persons as ends in themselves" (*AL* §128). In describing the spirit fostered by the attitudes engendered by an ecological conversion as 'tender', Francis thus portrays it as intrinsically interpersonal. Thus the attitude to creation to which Francis exhorts us is a fundamentally interpersonal one, defined by a dynamic of love towards creation as an Other.[136]

1.2. DO WE "ENCOUNTER" NON-PERSON CREATURES?

This raises a question: many aspects of creation are not persons. Consequently, it seems odd for them to be able to occupy the position of Other, which, at least as far as we have seen it so far, seems intrinsically bound up in conditions of personality. In this vein, Francis explicitly states that humans possess a "uniqueness" in respect of their "personal identity" and "capacity to enter into dialogue with others and with God himself" (*LS* §81). This seems to cut against Francis' identification of non-human creation as something that we can relate to in the sense of the *I-Thou.* However, equally, the consistency of this imagery raises questions about whether it can be dismissed as mere metaphor. A more careful reading of *LS* provides us with the material for a broadly Thomist metaphysics of analogy in which this imagery can be taken literally. In doing so, it provides the basis for a metaphysics that coheres with the themes of *indeterminacy,* non-*totality,* and *inabsoluteness* that we have been following throughout this thesis.

One illuminating statement by Francis is his careful specification that we must not identify creation with God, writing that "there is an infinite distance between God and the things of this world, which do not possess his fullness" (*LS* §88). In parsing the distinction in this way, he reveals something of what is going on here. We noted in chapter two that this language

[136] In *LS,* this theme of 'unselfing' also takes on a more straightforwardly ascetic sense: Francis calls for "modesty, humility, and simplicity" which refuses desires for destructive practices and instant gratification, as well as appreciating and being satisfied with what we have (Christie, 2017: 123-124; *c.f. LS* §222).

of “fullness” evokes Francis’ first principle in *EG* §222-225. In this, Francis writes that ““time” has to do with fullness as an expression of the horizon which constantly opens before us, while each individual moment has to do with limitation as an expression of enclosure” (*EG* §222). In short, then, the distinction between creatures and God is an eschatological one.

Francis repeats this language in his earlier statement that the purpose of all creatures can be found in “a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things” (*EG* §83). While this, in itself, is relatively unclear, it nevertheless clarifies the above distinction further: the eschatological destiny of creatures, which God possesses and the possession of which lies at the heart of the distinction between God and creatures, is found in God. In other words, what sets God aside from creation is precisely that God is God.

In short, for Francis, the distinction between creatures and God in this instance lies not in some third term in relation to which they are both mediated, but in the divine Being itself. We find a similar idea in Aquinas’ understanding of divine and created existence. For Aquinas, God’s perfection entails impassibility. Aquinas conceives of change in terms of difference in the context of continuous identity. In order to articulate this, Aquinas distinguishes between a being’s substance (its unchanging essential identity), and its accidents (the different properties it may or may not possess in existence). These concepts enable him to articulate change in terms of an immutable substance manifesting different combinations of accidents. In this context, in order for God to be impassable, God must lack accidents in which change occurs. Aquinas parses this in terms of an identity between the divine substance and the divine existence; *what* God is is fully and entirely expressed in *how* God is (see *Summa Theologica* I, q. 3, a. 4). This also means that God exists *necessarily,* by virtue of God’s identity or essence, rather than by virtue of accidental conditions (*contingently*). To put it differently, God’s existence is identical to God’s essence (Oliver, 2017: 45-6; see *ST* I, q. 4, a. 6).

In contrast, creation exists contingently; its existence is distinct from its essence. This is what is established by the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*: rather than existing “of its own power or by its own right”, creation exists by virtue of “that which exists in and of itself, namely God”, in whose existence it “participates” (Oliver, 2017: 47; see *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I.22.9). This identifies a fundamental distinction between creation and God which mirrors that drawn by Francis: creation is not that which necessitates its own existence; the substance of creation is distinct from the divine substance.

Francis' characterisation of this distinction as being one of "infinite distance" resonates with Thomas' recognition of what Oliver describes as a "radical and irreducible asymmetry between God and creation", which arises from this distinction (2017: 48). Creation is entirely dependent upon God for its existence, yet God is entirely independent of creation (2017: 50). Moreover, the relation between God and creation is entirely unmediated: because God creates *ex nihilo,* there is no third term which might mediate this relation. This means that there is nothing that God and creation have "in common", in the sense of a mediating term; their difference is "not a difference of degree, nor a difference of kind" (2017: 51; see *ST* I, q.13, a. 7).

This raises a challenge when talking about the divine "being". On the one hand, we speak of God as possessing "being" in a sense. On the other, because of this radical distinction, this sense, if proper to God, must be radically different to that which we use for creaturely "being". Aquinas expresses this similarity across the difference in terms of *analogical* language. This kind of language stands in distinction to two other types of language use, the terms for which we encountered in our discussion in the last chapter: firstly, there is *equivocal* language. This kind of language can have different intensions, as with the word "pitcher" between "the pitcher of beer" and "the baseball pitcher". Secondly, there is *univocal* language use. Univocal language has only one intension. For example, "John's wisdom" and "Peter's wisdom" both use the terms "wisdom" in the same way (Oliver, 2017: 66). In contrast, *analogical* language intends resemblance across difference. For example, it means different things to describe a husband and a dog as "faithful" (that is, the word is not being used univocally), but equally, nor are we using it entirely equivocally (2017: 67).

For Aquinas, a specific kind of analogy holds between God and creatures: one of "attribution". In this analogy, the resemblance between analogates lies in their "common focus". Aquinas gives the example of 'health': we can describe a person as "healthy", but also a complexion or diet. When we describe a person as "healthy", we are talking about their possessing 'health' in themselves. However, when we describe their complexion or diet as "healthy", we are not talking about the 'health' of the complexion or the diet in themselves. Rather talking about the way these object signify (in the case of complexion), or cause (in the case of diet) the health of the person. To put it differently, health is ascribed "*primarily*" to the person, and *"secondarily*" to health and complexion "by virtue of their relation to that person" (Oliver, 2017: 68; see *ST* I, q.13 a.5). This kind of analogy holds with regards to the "being" of God and creatures insofar as the being of creatures is by

participation in that of God: to claim that creatures have "being" in this context is to illustrate their causal dependency on God's being. The 'common focus' of "being" in this context is God's being, while the fact that one is dependent upon the other is the distinction between the two uses (2017: 72).[137]

Francis himself touches on analogical metaphysics in *LS* §80, invoking Thomas' understanding of divine activity. In doing so, Francis tacitly invokes the analogical metaphysics undergirding it: for Thomas, this divine activity is intelligibly "activity" because it bears out a resemblance to human activity, but is also of an entirely different metaphysical order – as illustrated in his example of human and divine art.[138] Similarly, we saw in our last chapter how Francis rejects equivocal and univocal ecclesiologies, instead opting for a metaxological model in which difference is preserved within an intelligible (if not necessarily intuitive) unity. We might understand this metaxological unity as one of analogical resemblance, wherein each element is 'Church', albeit in distinct ways. This analogical language equips Francis to negotiate the relationship between encountering creation and God: when we 'encounter' creation, we do so in an analogical way to that in which we 'encounter' God through it.[139]

As an explanation, this still seems obscure; just what does it mean to analogically "encounter" a non-person as Other? One way in which we might understand this is in terms of resemblance. Francis reminds us that "[t]he world was created by three Persons acting as a single divine principle" (*LS* §238). Recognising this, he writes, "suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation" (*LS* §239). He references Bonaventure in order to elaborate on this when he writes,

[137] Interpreters such as McInnerny (1996) and Davies (1998, 2012) dispute this metaphysical reading of the analogy of being. These interpretive debates lie beyond the scope of this thesis, and are somewhat extrinsic to our use of Aquinas. Nevertheless, Oliver cites *De principiis naturae* VI.33-34, and *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* IV.535 as sources in which Aquinas gives it this metaphysical sense (2017: 72, footnote 14).

[138] In a further similarity, Oliver notes that the lack of mediation which undergirds this distinction in Aquinas means that God is "infinitely close to creation" (2017: 51). Likewise, in this Thomistic passage, Francis describes God as "intimately present to each being", even as the divine action does not impinge on creaturely autonomy (*LS* §80).

[139] In doing so, however, he preserves the analogical distinction between God and creation. This problematises panentheistic readings of *LS* such as Daniels (2015: 330).

> **The Franciscan saint teaches us that each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile. In this way, he points out to us the challenge of trying to read reality in a Trinitarian key.**

(*LS* §239)

This 'Trinitarian key' serves to undergird a metaphysics which makes sense of analogous encounter. Citing Aquinas, Francis writes that just as "[t]he divine Persons are subsistent relations", so too "the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships". Hence, "[c]reatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships" (*LS* §240).[140] In short, just as God's substance is characterised by relations between Persons, so too is creation constituted by relations; between beings within creation and God, and, most pertinently here, between beings and other beings.

However, Francis is more specific than this, continuing to write that

> **The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion... In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.**

(*LS* §240)

In this passage, Francis portrays the expression of the life of the Trinity within creation as specifically interpersonal. These expressions are relationships of "communion", and embody "solidarity"; and it is specifically as "person[s]" that humans find their fulfilment in these relationships. Perhaps then, we can read Francis as taking not just the relational aspect of the Trinity as the model for cosmic order, but this relational aspect as specifically *between persons*.

[140] Francis cites here *ST* I, q. 11, a. 3; q. 21, a. 1, ad 3; q. 47, a. 3.

We can also account for this interpersonality via Aquinas.[141] Despite the radical and unmediated distinction between God and creation, Aquinas does not think that the relation between the two is an inscrutable one. Rather, the act of creation arises from the divine nature, which is the perichoretic relation of love between the persons of the Trinity. Following from his Aristotelean and Neoplatonic influences, Aquinas holds that effects resemble their causes – hence creation, as an expression of this love, is itself a relation of love. As such, the difference between God and creation, as Oliver puts it, "is a participation in, or trace of, the eternal differences and relations of the Godhead" (see *ST* I, q. 45, a.7). Moreover, this resemblance extends to creatures themselves, who Aquinas sees as manifesting a trinitarian nature of their own: just as the Father creates through the Son, whom Aquinas identifies with the Father's knowledge; and the Spirit, whom Aquinas identifies with the Father's will, so to do creatures possess both knowledge and will (2017: 52; see *ST* I, q. 45, a. 6). In short, Aquinas sees the Trinitarian origins of creation reflected in its structure not merely as a general relationality, but in the *specific relations between creatures* themselves.

We might read *LS* §240 as invoking a similar idea to Aquinas: creation resembles the Trinity not merely in being relational.[142] Rather *the relationships within creation* analogously resemble *the relations themselves within the Trinity*. The relations within the Trinity are relationships between Persons. Consequently, the relationships within creation resemble

[141] As before, we will be taking our reading of Aquinas from Oliver (2017), who makes many of the connections which illuminate Francis.

Note also that Bonaventure shows little concern for issues such as the analogy of divine and creaturely being, which preoccupies Aquinas in his discussion of divine and creaturely resemblance, as well as our discussion below. Nevertheless, at least as Reynolds reconstructs it from its implicit deployment in Bonaventure's writings, he also deploys a non-univocal theory of this resemblance, which he similarly grounds in the Aristotelean principle of effects resembling their causes (Reynolds, 2003: 231; 238). These are key themes of our following discussion, intimating the alternative possibility of a systematic reading of *LS* via Bonaventure.

[142] Showing the willingness to make this move, at least in parallel, Francis explicitly states that *creatures* themselves have a Trinitarian structure internal to themselves (*LS* §238-239). However, he reads this in light of Bonaventure's schema rather than Aquinas'. Edwards summarises this reading: "Each creature in its very existence represents the Source of All as the cause of its being; in its identity, each represents the Word of God as its exemplar; in its goodness, each represents the Spirit, who brings it to its final fulfilment" (2017: 88). Note also how the highly abstract nature of these correspondences resists more substantive identifications, unlike Aquinas' more concrete, and thus more *determinate,* psychological Trinitarianism. We will return to this in our discussion of Kilby's (2000) critique of social Trinitarianism below.

these 'inter-Personal' relationships, specifically in manifesting a creaturely 'inter-personality'.[143] A being-in-relation is thus always analogously a being-in-*relation*.

This is entirely compatible with the description of human personhood as "unique" (*LS* §81). In this context, it can be read as a restatement of humanity's privileged nature as *imago dei,* possessing a higher degree of resemblance to God with regards to divine Personhood compared to the rest of creation.[144] Nevertheless, under this reading, it is also meaningful to talk about wider relationships within creation in analogously interpersonal terms: the linguistic analogy tracks a metaphysical analogy.

This also makes sense of Francis' talk of encounter specifically in metaphysical terms. For Buber, *relation* is ultimately a phenomenological category. In contrast, in *LF,* Francis writes of Abraham that "[i]n the voice which speaks to him, the patriarch recognizes a profound call which was always present at the core of his being" (*LF* §11). Although in our third chapter we approached *relation* in terms of subjectivity, we can now speak of it without bracketing metaphysical claims. Similarly, this also makes sense of Francis' association of encounter, and the transcendence of the Other within it, with "reality" in his third principle in *EG:* If the transcendent Other is a category within the ontology of *relation*, read in this way it is also a metaphysical one, and talk about it is talk about something beyond the ideal. *Relation* is a metaphysical category, expressed in metaphysical resemblance in the being-in-relation of creation.

In short, then, we can read the interpersonal language of *LS* in the following way: for Francis, God is relational. Therefore, Francis' ontology is one of relation, in which the being of creatures is figured in terms of a being-in-relation. This can be understood as exhibiting degrees of analogical resemblance to the highest form of being-in-relation, possessed by humans, and exemplified in God, which is being-in-*relation*. To analogously encounter them

[143] This move involves a shift from divine "Person" to creaturely "person" that is admittedly dubious. We will address this below in our discussion of Kilby's (2000) critique of social Trinitarianism.

[144] This perhaps also goes some way to answering Dombrowski's charge of hypocrisy levelled at Francis' willingness to subordinate individual animals to human use. Dombrowski perceptively notes that Francis' critique of anthropocentrism is at the service of a wider "theocentrism" rather than a commitment to the moral status of individual animals, and argues that this fails to recognise the implications of that critique with regards to that moral status (2015: 32). However, the analogical resemblance between persons and non-person Others does not necessarily (although it may) include individual moral status, meaning that this status need not be assumed, regardless of whether we reject the anthropocentrism under which it has traditionally been discarded. This identification of theocentrism also corrects Rolston's misreading of Francis as a "biocentric holist" (2015: 52).

is to relate to them on the basis of this resemblance, in such a way that they serve as relatants analogously to 'the Other' in encounter.

1.3. HEARING CREATION

So what does it mean to relate to beings on the basis of their resemblance to the divine Persons? If our relation to creation is analogous to our relationship to God, then it might resemble our relationship to God in the sense of the *indeterminacy, inabsoluteness*, and non-*totality* which it entails for knowledge. That is, our communion with creation may involve hearing, or at least something analogous to it.

Francis presents some indication that he believes this to be the case in at least two places. Firstly, a recurring theme within *LS* is that everything is "connected" (*LS* §91; §72), "interconnected" (§70, 92, 138, 240), or "interrelated" (*LS* §120, 137, 138). In many cases, this refers to the need for "a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis", integrating all its various facets in an "*integral ecology*" (*LS* §137). For example, Francis writes:

> **Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet… are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings. It follows that the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.**
>
> (*LS* §138)

Prima facie, this passage just indicates that there are causal connections between various phenomena that are missed by a non-systemic analysis. However, in the context of his ontology of *relation*, it can also be read in terms of a meditation on the nature of being-in-relation as disclosed to knowledge. For Francis, the being-in-relation of the Other possesses a *qualitative* transcendence over the determinations of *sight*: there are aspects of the Other which, although available to *touch,* are intrinsically irreducible to thematicity. In non-person creation, we may lose this qualitative transcendence: its being-in-relation is only its shadow, (at the risk of pushing a metaphor too far) lacking this additional 'dimension'. However, it nevertheless manifests an analogous *quantitative* transcendence over specific knowledges

by virtue of the complexity of its being-in-relation, which is so vast as to never be fully explored or understood. To put it differently, the world resembles God in that it resists the construction of *total* knowledges; albeit for different reasons, this difference being an expression of the distinction between them.[145]

Secondly, non-person creatures possess a transcendence over knowledge and the will, requiring of us a kind of 'obedience' to their nature. This concern lies at the heart of Francis' locating the "human origins" of the ecological crisis in the "technocratic paradigm" (*LS* §101). This paradigm equates increasing power over the world with increasing progress, without reference to issues of responsibility (*LS* §105). Francis critiques this paradigm as falsely "*undifferentiated and one-dimensional",* exalting a "confrontational" schema involving "a subject who… progressively approaches and gains control over an external object", which itself is rendered "formless, completely open to manipulation" (*LS* §106).

Francis opposes this to an approach that recognises the "reality" of "the possibilities offered by the things themselves", "receiving what nature itself [allows], as if from its own hand" (*LS* §106). In speaking of "reality", Francis intimates a connection between his analysis, and his third principle in *EG* §231-233, which exhorts us to resist idealist reductions of realities that in fact transcend them. Read in these terms, the problem posed by the technocratic paradigm is that it reduces creation to a resource to be exploited by power. Hence he also describes this paradigm in terms of a "Promethean vision of mastery" (*LS* §116). In doing so, he invokes terminology reminiscent of the "self-absorbed, promethean neopelagianism" of *EG* §94, which we saw in chapter three is opposed to the recognition of the true transcendence of the Other over ideal formulations.

This brings Francis' analysis into contact with his ethic of 'unselfing': at the heart of the technocratic paradigm is the failure to recognise the transcendence of creation over the concepts of resource according to which we would master it. This is opposed to unselfing precisely because it refuses 'obedience' to this transcendence.

[145] It is thus significant that *LS,* in sketching a holistic picture of creation, "does not pretend to know it all" (Gold, 2017: 95), both in terms of its internal consistency, but also as embodying a characteristically reparative refusal of *totality* more generally. Keller commends this "mystical unknowing" as lending itself to more sensitive, cautious approaches to relationships with others, which in turn facilitates the formation of real relationships (2013: 179), thereby integrating our relationships with others into our relationship with creation as in *LS* §66. Poznański closes the hermeneutical circle, noting that it is only through true dialogue with others that theology can acquire the holistic, interdisciplinary knowledge that *LS* prescribes (2017: 298).

In summary, then, for Francis, the being of creatures is a being-in-relation. This derives from the nature of the Trinity, as a relationship between persons. The specifically interpersonal nature of Trinitarian relations bears out an analogical resemblance in creation, in which interpersonal *relation* or encounter is the prototypical form of relation. Non-personal relationships analogically resemble this interpersonal prototype. Consequently, they also analogically manifest the conditions of hearing which attend knowledge within an interpersonal relationship.

1.4. TRINITARIAN APOPHATICISM

Superficially, in drawing a correspondence between ontic relations and the immanent Trinity, *LS* appears to present a cosmic or metaphysical 'social trinitarianism', in which the Trinity serves as the paradigm for relations between (varying analogical degrees of) persons. It is important to recognise that this is a misreading, not in the least because of the problems that social Trinitarianism presents for our project. These problems are twofold.

Firstly, there is the way social Trinitarianism draws an analogy between Trinitarian "Persons" and creaturely "persons". Kilby notes that theologians who are sceptical of social Trinitarianism in general, argue that "Person" in the Trinitarian sense is a technical term that has very little shared meaning with "person" in the anthropological sense, instead serving to identify distinctions between relations of procession within the Godhead. In this context, critics such as Rahner and Barth argue that the conflation of the two concepts leads to the introduction of a tritheism into Trinitarian theology, wherein the hypostases of the divine substance become "three separate "I"s, three centres of consciousness, three distinct wills and so on" (2000: 434).

Secondly, there are theologians who dispute the claim that the two terms are so radically different, and instead argue that they have sufficient common meaning for the analogy to be intelligible. However, they argue, our contemporary anthropological sense of "person" invokes certain ideas that must be resisted in a Trinitarian context. Moreover, they claim, these ideas are also inappropriate to anthropology, and so a recovery of this Trinitarian sense can serve as an anthropological corrective (2000: 434). Within this latter group, which includes theologians such as Moltmann and Gunton, there are those who also see the relations between Persons (specifically the way in which they manifest distinction in unity) as a model for society and a source of metaphysical and ethical insight into social relations (2000: 434-438).

Kilby argues that the approach of this latter group is often predicated on a troubling "projection", in which the Trinity itself is reduced to a principle of affirmation for one's own ideological commitments, which can then function as a determining idea of unity for wider social theory along those lines (2000: 442). The possibility of this projection is underpinned by the first issue of too close an identification between divine and human Persons/persons, turning the Trinity into a literal society which must be understood in terms of our own social commitments, as well as upon which our society should be modelled (2000: 441).

Whether or not these critiques are apt of social Trinitarian theologies more widely lies outside the scope of this thesis, as does the historical aspect of the former critique. However, if apt of our reading of *LS*, the second critique does raise the concern that Francis, in appealing to the Trinity as the model of ontic relation, reifies and thus *totalises* a particular immanent idea of that relation (encounter). In doing so, he would seem to betray the reparative impulse towards non-*totality*.

In response to the second critique, it is worth considering just what 'encounter' really constitutes. As we noted above, to encounter creatures is to relate to them in a way that is conditioned by *hearing.* As such, to describe a creature as Other is to describe it primarily negatively, indicating the limits of our *sight* before it. This raises the question of whether it even makes sense to talk about *totalising* encounter: substantively speaking, all this constitutes is the universal limitation of our claims to positive thematic knowledge. As such, Francis' ontology of *relation* actually challenges the kinds of *totalising, determining* hermeneutics that Kilby finds at the heart of social Trinitarianism. Likewise, reading encounter into the Trinity merely encourages us to be more agnostic about its inner life: what it amounts to is a statement that the relations between its Persons *cannot* be exhaustively determined according to any immanent ideas.

Indeed, this leaves us in a position much like the one Kilby herself advocates. Against social Trinitarianism (and similar approaches, such as psychological readings of the Trinity),[146] Kilby champions a reading of the doctrine as a kind of "second order proposition, a rule, or perhaps set of rules" for talking about God, aimed less towards providing a substantive account of God's nature, and more towards preventing us from lapsing into misunderstandings (2000: 443). As with Francis, this hermeneutic moves us away from attempting to read the Trinity

[146] In our previous chapter, we noted that Francis does identify a more *determinate* Trinitarian structure to creatures (*LS* §238-9). However, this structure is too abstract to say anything more *determinate* than that creatures exist, have an identity, and are good – something which I doubt even Kilby would object to.

under any *determining* idea. The difference is that Kilby moves us on to an entirely different way of reading the doctrine, as opposed to Francis who merely tells us how *not* to read it.

In short, despite superficial appearances, Francis is better described as presenting not a 'social Trinitarianism', but a 'Trinitarian apophaticism'. This also enables us to respond to the former critique. This critique objects to the inappropriate characterisation of the Persons of the Trinity, for example as centres of consciousness or will. However, if our language of encounter serves to indicate the negative limitation of *sight*, then our drawing an analogy between divine "Persons" and creaturely "persons" does not inappropriately ascribe such positive characteristics. Rather, it indicates that, in both cases, the kinds of relatant involved are such that the relationship between them escapes thematic *determination*. In other words, rather than anthropomorphising the Trinity, this analogy professes its transcendence; a transcendence that is resembled in humans, to be sure, but only insofar as humans possess characteristics that escape *determination,* rather than constituting *determinations* in themselves.

Correspondingly, this apophaticism prevents the very dynamic upon which social Trinitarianism is founded – the drawing of correspondence between *determinate* aspects of the Trinity, and features of society; a dynamic which in itself can smuggle not just poor Trinitarian theology, but also troubling social theology. For example, Tonstad notes that certain Trinitarian social ontologies reproduce the procession of the Son from the Father, and Spirit from both, in terms of social inequality. Similarly to Kilby, Tonstad argues that this is enabled by the projection of worldly inequalities, such as gender relations, onto the Trinity itself – a projection which thus reifies social inequality within the Godhead, and also collapses the distinction between immanent and economic Trinities, from which these images of inequality are ostensibly drawn, in the process (2016: 10-11).

Francis' Trinitarian apophaticism draws an analogical correspondence between interpersonality and perichoresis. However, he does so in terms of a shared *indeterminacy.* This says nothing about the correspondence between *determinate* aspects of the immanent Trinity, such as the order of procession, and *determinate* ontic relations, such as social order. Consequently, neither can be used to understand the other, at least based on this alone.

1.5. Analogy and Hierarchy

Another potential concern may lie in our appeal to an analogical metaphysics. This concern is voiced by Surin, who notes that appeals to a *via analogia* intrinsically invoke a hierarchy

among beings, distinguishing between them in terms of gradations of analogical primacy in relation to the Godhead (Surin, 2005: 258). This is problematic for our project (and society in general!) insofar as, in reifying hierarchical ontic relations, these metaphysics become principles of hierarchical *determination*.

One response would be to note that, for Francis, one's position in this hierarchy is proportional to the resemblance between the relationships one is capable of occupying and that of encounter. This means that this hierarchy does not serve to distinguish between persons, who are all capable of this mode of relation.

Another response turns on the recognition that, whereas the analogical metaphysics which trouble Surin produce an analogical structure between *creatures,* ordering them as objects within an analogical relational schema, Francis' metaphysics does not accept an easy distinction between creatures and the relations between them. We see this in how Francis recognises the possibility of analogical 'encounter'; ways of being-in-relation which resemble other ways of being-in-relation not just in terms of the beings involved *simpliciter*, but also of the relations between them. That is, his analogical metaphysics also structures relations between *the relations themselves, as objects*.

This means that this hierarchy serves to distinguish between modes of relation. If it privileges certain objects over others, then it privileges certain modes of relation over other modes. These privileged modes are the ones closest to encounter. This privileging of encounter warns against the hierarchical subordination of beings in two ways. Firstly, on an epistemic level, encounter is characterised by *indeterminacy*. Consequently, privileging encounter as a mode of relation involves refusing to *determine* the other in ways that render encounter (or its closest possible approximation) impossible. This ought to at least give us pause when asserting hierarchies, which risk this *determination* in the course of their ordering. Secondly, on an ethical level, we saw previously that encounter requires an attitude of 'unselfing', which is exemplified in a tender love that moves us to "approach a person with immense respect and a certain dread of causing them harm or taking away their freedom" (*AL* §127). This raises caution about aspiring to inhabit relationships which might potentially constrain the legitimate exercise of this freedom, including dominating social hierarchies.

2. A *RELATIONAL* METAPHYSICS

So far, we have argued that Francis employs a relational ontology, in which being is being-in-relation. He argues that this derives from the origins of creation in the Trinity. Insofar as the

relational life of the Trinity is a set of *relations* between persons, this leads him to claim that the primary analogue of being-in-relation in creation is interpersonal *relation*. We argued that this imparts the conditions of *hearing,* either literally or analogically, to our knowledge of creatures, insofar as this knowledge arises in the context of our *relation* to them.

However, for Francis, the being-in-relation of creatures is also with God. This is evidenced by the way we can encounter God *in* creation; a transcendent or 'metaphysical' dimension of creaturely being-in-relation that impinges on our knowledge of those creatures in two ways: firstly, in our knowledge of those creatures themselves, which can only be known as being-in-relation to God; secondly, in our ontic relation to those creatures, which has a metaphysical dimension in itself. The upshot of this is that our knowledge of creatures in their being-in-relation also involves knowledge of God as that with which they are in relation. This in turn means that our knowledge of creatures not only manifests *hearing* as the conditions of ontic knowledge, but also as the condition of our knowledge of God, in relation to which creatures are known. This next section will attend to this.

2.1. Creation as site of encounter with God

In our third chapter, we saw how Francis sees faith as arising from an economy of *touch,* wherein we mystically encounter God in God's love, and 'touch back' in loving response. Following Oltvai (2018), we also saw how the loving gaze serves as a medium for this 'touching'. It is in these terms that Francis conceives of nature as a site of encounter with God. He writes that St. Francis also shows how gazing upon nature enables us to gaze upon God:

> **What is more, Saint Francis… invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness… For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty.**
>
> (*LS* §12)

Francis' loving gaze, before which each creature was "a sister united to him by bonds of affection" (*LS* §11), enables creation to become a site in which we can "glimpse" God in contemplation. In short, for Francis, the life and spirituality of St. Francis presents us with a vision of creation that is fundamentally interpersonal – not only ontically, in the sense that

it, and the beings within it, are to be gazed upon lovingly, like persons; but in that it mediates the person of God to us as the 'object' of our loving gaze.

Francis revisits these images when he later writes that

> **God has written a precious book, "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe"… "From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine".. "To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope"… We can say that "alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night"."**
>
> (*LS* §85)

And similarly,

> **…nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him.**
>
> (*LS* §88)

This sets out the second mode of encounter in Francis' ontology. Not only do we encounter other creatures, but we encounter God in and through them. In continuity with the language of chapter four, we might say that they play a quasi-sacramental role. Indeed, Francis himself makes this comparison when he describes the sacraments as "a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life". In the sacraments, creatures such as "[w]ater, oil, fire, and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power", mediating God to us in a unique way (*LS* §235). Nowhere is this more true than in the Eucharist, in which grace finds its "unsurpassable expression" through the giving of Christ's incarnate body as food. In participating in this sacrifice, the whole of creation is "[j]oined to the incarnate Son", who reaches our "intimate depths through a fragment of matter". Thus the sacrament "joins heaven and earth", its matter serving as the meeting point of all creation with its Creator (*LS* §236).[147]

[147] Yocum (2017) develops this in an ecological mystagogy that reads the elements in terms of their being part of the natural world.

This second mode of encounter shows that the being-in-relation of creatures is not exhausted by ontic relations. Rather, the being of creatures is also in-relation to God, to whom we can relate through them. Our encounter with God in creatures takes place in two contexts, both of which have implications for our ontic knowledge. Firstly, in the being-in-relation of creation to God. When we know creation, we know it as being-in-relation to God. Thus knowledge of creation is inseparable from our knowledge of God, in relation to which its being is defined. Secondly, in the analogical resemblance between our being-in-relation to creation and our being-in-relation to God. Because of this resemblance, we cannot relate to creation without relating to God – which is to say, our knowing creation is at once also knowing God. We will explore this below.

2.2. KNOWING CREATURES AS BEINGS-IN-RELATION-TO-GOD

For Francis, the being-in-relation of creation is fundamentally a being-in-relation with God. This metaphysical relation is prior to, and determinative of ontic relations. This means that knowledge of God as in-relation-to-creatures is a condition for knowledge of the being-in-relation of those creatures.

Francis writes that faith reveals to us the origin of the relationships internal to creation in the relational context in which creation itself arises, thereby allowing us "to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding". Hence contemplating the relationships which make up creation as a whole leads to contemplation of the divine, by which those relationships are mediated: "[i]n this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops" (*LS* §79). This includes the redemptive work accomplished through matter in the incarnation and sacraments. Hence Francis writes: "For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation" (*LS* §235).

In this context, Francis understands our relationship with other beings in terms of a shared relationship with God. He quotes Psalm 148:3-5, which entreats other creatures to join humanity in its praise of God (*LS* §72). Similarly, Francis notes that an understanding of the world as creation involves recognising that "God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things". In turn, this means recognising that "[e]very creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world" (*LS* §77). By highlighting the

tender nature of God's love, Francis construes the relationship between God and creation in terms of encounter. He then continues to write that in recognising this, we therefore can "ascend from created things" to contemplation of God (*LS* §77). In other words, according to Francis, in recognising the place of creation within this relationship of encounter, and thus adopting these terms for creation itself, we are able to relate to God.

Similarly, he writes that "called into being by one Father", all creatures "are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion". Because of these links, we must identify with the rest of creation, and feel its destruction as damage to ourselves (*LS* §89). Indeed, he writes, "when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one" (*LS* §92). In other words, our communion with creation is a function of our shared relationship with God as creator. He links this back to themes of fatherly love, noting that Jesus would invite his disciples "to recognize the paternal relationship God has with his all his creatures" and "that each one of them is important in God's eyes" (see *Luke* 12:6; *Matt.* 6:26) (*LS* §96).

Francis frames this in terms of the loving gaze, which we encountered in our third chapter, writing that "[t]he Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder", often stopping in his travels "to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father" (*LS* §97). Following Oltvai, we noted that, for Francis, we encounter grace through experiencing "being phenomenalized in a certain way" by the gaze of Christ as Other (Oltvai, 2018: 318). In this context, we might read Christ's invitation in terms of an earlier comment about the eschatological destination of all creatures in God, and humanity's responsibility in this process: "Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator" (*LS* §83). In making this link, Francis illustrates how Christ's invitation to encounter creation is also an invitation to join with and participate in the action of God in this redemptive economy of grace.

Francis likewise construes our own natures as a site of encounter with God, in the form of our co-operation with the divine work of creation. At the heart of this lies Francis understanding of the divine presence, which he construes in terms of a broadly Thomist account of divine activity. For Francis, divine activity does not compete with creaturely activity. Rather, it "ensures the subsistence and growth of each being" (*LS* §80) and "continues the work of creation" (*ST* I, q. 104, a. 1, ad. 4; in *LS* §80). To illustrate this, he

draws from Thomas' example of art: art as we produce it is the acting of creatures upon other, pre-existent creatures. In contrast, God's art (which is to say, the world) is produced at the level of creation itself, such that the nature of what is created tends towards its fulfilment in God's artistic design - "as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship" (*In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis exposito,* Lib. II, lectio 14; in *LS* §80). This enables God to act upon creation and be "intimately present to each being" without "impinging on the autonomy of his creature" (*LS* §80).

In this context, fulfilling our natures constitutes a co-operation with the divine activity that creates us to fulfil them. Francis expresses this when he employs this metaphysics to respond to the problem of evil, asserting that "many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperation with the creator" (*LS* §80). In other words, because God acts in the world in this way, fulfilling our natures is ultimately an act of co-operation with (which is to say, a response to) God – and knowing this can provide consoling knowledge about the meaning of otherwise troubling and inscrutable aspects of life.

In short, for Francis, to know creatures is to know them as beings-in-relation-to-God. Thus our knowledge of creatures cannot be separated out from our knowledge of God, in relation to whom their being is defined.

2.3. Relating to creatures as relating to God

Secondly, as we saw above, Francis recognises that the relations between creatures can analogically resemble one another. In this vein, Francis states that our being-in-relation to other creatures can symbolise our own being-in-relation to God. This means that we can reflect on (and thus inhabit) our relation to God through relating to other creatures, *in these ontic relations themselves*. In turn, this means that our relation to God is a feature of certain ontic relations, in which this metaphysical relation takes place. In such cases, our relation to those creatures is inextricable from our relation to God.

Francis writes:

> **Saint John of the Cross taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world "is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God"… the mystic experiences the**

intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that "all things are God".

(*LS* §234) [148]

In short, for St. John, God is present in creatures by virtue of their goodness, which participates in the divine goodness. In relating to them in their goodness, we thus relate to God in the divine Goodness.

However, Francis nuances this when he continues to write:

Standing awestruck before a mountain, he or she cannot separate this experience from God, and perceives that the interior awe being lived has to be entrusted to the Lord: "Mountains have heights and they are plentiful, vast, beautiful, graceful, bright and fragrant. These mountains are what my Beloved is to me."

(*LS* §234)[149]

This quotation introduces a significant dimension to the above passage: the mountains and the valleys are not merely what God is in general; they are what God is "to me". Read with this inflection, it is not merely the fact that both the valleys and God are pleasant that makes the valleys symbolise God: it is that they are both *pleasant to me.* To put it differently, whereas the first passage seems to focus on their common being in general (e.g. the valleys are good; God is good), the second passage locates the symbolic reference specifically in this being-to-me. In short, it inscribes St. John's mystical insight into the relational ontology of *LS:* rather than being a property of discrete beings, this resemblance lies in creaturely being-in-relation. Hence the majesty of the mountains before me is the majesty of God above me.

In this context, our knowledge of creatures is knowledge of our relation to those creatures; and our knowledge of this relation evokes knowledge of our loving encounter with God. This transforms our knowledge of other creatures in relation into knowledge of God: the mountains *are* what God "is to me". To know what the mountains are in this context is also to know what God is to me. Correspondingly, we cannot speak of the former without evoking the latter.

[148] Francis here quotes St. John's *Cántico Espiritual,* XIV, 5.
[149] *Ibid.,* XIV, 6-7

2.4. METAPHYSICAL *HEARING* AND ONTIC KNOWLEDGE

In short, for Francis, our knowledge of and relationship with creation is inextricable from our knowledge of and relationship with God. This inscribes the *indeterminacy* that attends our knowledge of and relationship with God into our knowledge of and relationship with creation. This is exemplified by Francis' rejection of the category of "nature" as a substitute for "creation". "Creation", he writes, "can only be understood" in terms of its relationship to God, as "a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all", and "a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion". In contrast, nature is a reduction of creation before the human intellect and will, which is "usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood, and controlled" (*LS* §76). In rejecting it for an explicit discourse of creation, Francis rejects this reduction.

Francis is led from this to an injunction to respect the nature of creation. He enjoins us to recognise that "the earth is the Lord's", refuting all human claims to "absolute ownership" (*LS* §67). In this context, we must recognise that "[w]e are not God". Rather, the earth "was here before us and it has been given to us". This is the foundation of the charge to "till and keep" the earth in Genesis 2:15, which he reads as implying "the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations" (*LS* §67). This means that we "must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world", which he also sees as undergirding the Bible's concern for non-human creatures (*LS* §68). This is because "other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes" (*LS* §69); a value which gives them a "priority of *being* over *being useful*" (The German Bishop's Conference, in *LS* (§69)). In short, our relation to God gives rise to an ethical impulse to recognise the analogous alterity of non-person creation, which is to say, our knowledge of the being-in-relation of creatures with us (as analogous 'Others') arises from our relationship with God.[150]

3. CONCLUSION: INDETERMINACY AND RELATION

In summary, *LS* outlines a cosmology of encounter, in the context of which our knowledge of creation is subject to the conditions of *hearing,* with all the *indeterminacy*, *non-totality* and

[150] This chimes with Christie's reading Francis' ecological conversion as one of *metanoia,* or repentance through the radical reorientation of the soul towards God (2017: 113). Imanaka (2018) relates this to the image of the gaze when she writes that *LS* invites us to engage in contemplation of the natural world; an activity that opens up the space for thought and imagination beyond the *determinations* of instrumental reason and instrumentalising power. In the language of chapter three, we might say that for Imanaka, this *metanoia* is thus a matter of re-learning to love.

inabsoluteness this entails. This is the case in two respects: firstly, Francis understands being as being-in-relation, wherein the being of creatures analogously resembles the being of the persons who encounter one another within the life of the Trinity. This means that even non-person creatures must be approached as 'analogous Others', our relation to them manifesting analogous *indeterminacy* to that involved in the encounter with the Other proper. Secondly, our knowledge of creation is *determined* by our knowledge of God, which, as we saw in chapter three, is conditioned by *hearing.* This means that our knowledge of creation is likewise conditioned by *indeterminacy, non-totality,* and *inabsoluteness.* Because it extends to knowledge about creation in general, this *indeterminacy* impinges on the doctrine and dogma which seek to describe it. Thus it extends beyond the focus of *credere in Deum* of the last two chapters to issues of *credere Deum.*

In many ways, this conclusion completes the main argument of this thesis: in establishing these conditions as features of all knowledge, Francis universalises the reparative hermeneutic underpinned by the epistemology of *LF.*

However, this *indeterminacy* raises two further issues: firstly, of how we can both acknowledge it and hold to our doctrinal and dogmatic commitments. Secondly, of the breakdown of parameters for negotiating disagreement. This raises an affective issue, relating to fears of danger in unresolvable disagreement. We will look at how *LS* enables us to resolve this issue, arguing that it does so in two ways: by providing us with a more readily accepted reading of disagreement as variation in *credere in* Deum; and providing an eschatological narrative of disagreement that promises reconciliation, enabling us to approach disagreement in hope rather than fear.

VII. Comedy and Consolation

In our last chapter, we saw how the relational metaphysics of *LS* extends the conditions of *hearing* to our knowledge of the world in general. This chapter responds to concerns around this wide-ranging *indeterminacy* in knowledge. In section 1, we will show how Francis' acceptance of *indeterminacy* in knowledge can be squared with doctrinal commitment, arguing that Francis can sustain first-order commitments by relocating indeterminacy to a second-order level. We will then move from this to respond to concerns relating to second-order indeterminacy and threat – namely the fear that it leads to unresolvable disagreement in "epistemological crisis", which in turn introduces degenerative pluralism into inquiry. These concerns motivate the paranoid project of *Veritatis Splendor,* and may likewise inhibit a reparative response to this wide-ranging *indeterminacy* in knowledge. We will make our response in two ways: firstly, in section 2, by arguing that Francis' 'ontology of *relation*, outlined in the previous chapter, enables us to narrate difference in *credere Deum* along the lines of the argument in chapter four. Because *credere Deum* is a function of *credere in Deum,* we can read difference in *credere Deum* as more readily acceptable difference in *credere in Deum*. Secondly, in section 3, we will argue that the eschatological vision of *LS,* when read in conjunction with Francis' 'four principles' for overcoming social tensions in *EG,* equips us with a hopeful, comic narrative of reconciliation that enables us to view disagreement as non-threatening. We will begin by looking at the necessity of coping with anxiety for overcoming paranoia. We will then look to how the eschatological vision of *LS* is one of reconciliation. We will then look at how the Eucharistic theology of *LS* presents the Church with the promise of this reconciliation. We will argue that this establishes a comic narrative of conflict, which in turn provides the security needed to overcome anxiety around conflict, and thus the temptation to a paranoid hermeneutics of disagreement. Section 4 concludes the chapter with a reflection on theological style in the face of this confidence.

1. Indeterminacy, doctrinal commitment, and epistemological crisis

The wide-ranging *indeterminacy* argued for in the previous chapter raises an issue for theology. A simplistic rendering of this issue would be something like the following: if all our knowledge is *indeterminate,* how can we hold to our doctrinal and dogmatic commitments? In this vein, we noted in our fourth chapter that Francis is not indifferent to issues of either doctrine (particularly in the necessity of the articles of faith) or form. Consequently, the

indeterminacy in knowledge presented by his epistemology appears to also bear up a tension internal to the wider systematic sweep of his documents.

A simple answer to this simplistic concern is by way of a distinction between *first*- and *second-order* indeterminacy. By *first-order indeterminacy*, I mean the *indeterminacy* internal to a theory, or the conclusion of an argument. First order *indeterminacy* says, "I don't know" or "x or y or z". Recognising this kind of indeterminacy would enable us to suspend judgment between differing theories, embracing them both as potential sources of truth prior to ultimately making a decision. In this regard, it is this kind of indeterminacy which threatens doctrinal commitments.

However, this is not the only form of *indeterminacy. Second-order indeterminacy* is *indeterminacy* external to a theory, or concerning the premises rather than the conclusion of an argument. It says, "I know, but I could be wrong", or "x, but then again maybe ¬x". *Second-order indeterminacy* is the kind of indeterminacy that we find when we constantly ask "why", repeatedly questioning our premises until we realise that there is always potentially a 'step back' that we can take – even if we can't see it.

Recognising this indeterminacy can open our imagination to *possible* alternative positions. However, it is arguably trivial in terms of our *actual* epistemic commitments: we cannot anticipate (i.e. know) 'unknown unknowns', meaning that we are always haunted by their possibility.[151] Given that this is ubiquitously the case, we must thus be able to hold theological positions, at least if we can hold beliefs at all. Recognising this kind of indeterminacy would thus enable us to remain open to alterity as *possibly* indicating truth, even against the best reasons to the contrary offered by our *actual* beliefs. In short, this kind of *indeterminacy* allows us to 'think' the possibility of learning from the other, even if we think they are wrong. In this way, Francis is able to both affirm the timeless necessity of the articles of the faith to the tradition (see *LF* §48), while also admitting the indeterminacy that comes with the transcendent orientation of the faith itself, which in turn (as we saw in chapters four and five) problematises our reading of the tradition – an indeterminacy,

[151] Note that accepting this argument strikes against paranoid appeals to *absoluteness* and *totality.* Moreover, it is a logical point that is, at least superficially, not tied in to any specific synthetic theological position. As a result, it is perhaps a reason for why Francis' reparative approach may actually be better than its paranoid counterpart, rather than merely a possible alternative as we have been exploring it. However, this issue is secondary to the argument's purpose here in accounting for how Francis can maintain his doctrinal commitments alongside his commitment to indeterminacy.

moreover, that is secured by those articles, which themselves resist *determination* in their assimilating function.

However, while *second-order indeterminacy* may be compatible with doctrinal and dogmatic commitments, it also introduces a subtly related problem. This is the problem of "epistemological crisis", or intractable conflict arising from methodological uncertainty, which *VS* seeks to solve by way of its paranoid hermeneutics. Unless we address this problem, Francis' reparative alternative cannot present itself as workable.

In our first chapter, we followed Odozor (1995: xiii) in noting how *Veritatis Splendor* responds to an "epistemological crisis": in the years following the second Vatican Council, moral theologians, released from their neoscholastic fetters, began to go about their inquiry in a new diversity of ways that seemed (to some) to strain the boundaries of what was intelligibly 'Catholic'. In short, *VS* responds to the threat of alterity introduced to theology by these loosening methodological conditions. It does so by re-tightening them, consolidating the norms of inquiry which were being eroded.

MacIntyre's concept of an epistemological crisis is rooted in his idea of "rational enquiry as embodied in a tradition" (1988: 7). In short, for MacIntyre, rationality is a matter of navigating a tradition of inquiry: institutionalised methods which are embodied in the life of a community, and which produce a language that captures and enables discussion of the world as it manifests to human minds so that disagreements within the community can be mediated. In this context, an epistemological crisis represents a crisis of tradition in which a tradition constituted enquiry "ceases to make progress" according to its own standards, and is no longer able to mediate disagreements within its community (1988: 361-2).

Epistemological crises, according to MacIntyre, are marked by the "dissolution of historically founded certainties", and their solutions lie in "the invention or discovery of new concepts and the framing of some new type or types for theory which meet three exacting requirements": firstly, they must "furnish a solution to the problems which had previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way". Secondly, they must also be able to explain precisely what rendered the tradition inadequate in its previous formulation. Thirdly, these previous two tasks must be accomplished in a way that "exhibits some fundamental continuity of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of enquiry had been defined up to this point". However, the developments themselves will not be derivable from the elements of the previous tradition.

That is, "[i]maginative conceptual development will have to occur", which will be justified precisely in the success of the innovations in achieving what was previously impossible (MacIntyre, 1988: 362). MacIntyre invokes the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was predicated on philosophical concepts issuing "from debates rationally unresolved up to that point", and Aquinas' synthesis of Augustinian and Aristotelean traditions as examples of these developments (MacIntyre, 1988: 362-3).

In short, although a tradition crisis may manifest in first-order *indeterminacy* through preventing the resolution of specific questions, it is essentially an issue of second-order *indeterminacy*. A tradition crisis represents a breakdown of the norms of inquiry themselves, giving rise to disagreements which are intractable precisely because the norms of inquiry which would mediate those disagreements have failed. They thus necessitate a development of those norms in a way that goes beyond the bounds of what they initially *determine*.

Following Odozor's analysis, *VS* is thus ultimately concerned with eliminating this second-order *indeterminacy* – an *indeterminacy* which it sees as introducing a threatening pluralism of thought which incorporates "*certain interpretations of Christian morality which are not consistent with "sound teaching"* (2 *Tim* 4:3)" (*VS* §32). Its response, as we saw in our first chapter, is to push a paranoid hermeneutics in which the old set of norms, and their *determining* power, are *totalised* and thus *absolutized* – in turn confirming the negation of rival norms as 'unsound'.

Odozor's diagnosis of this threat as being one of epistemological crisis introduces an affective dimension to the phenomenon. What *Veritatis Splendor* exhibits is the potential anxiety-inducing effects of second-order *indeterminacy,* and, correspondingly, a pastoral challenge involved in recognising it. In this context, in order to acknowledge second-order *indeterminacy*, and perhaps to enable a more reparative hermeneutics in general, we must be able to cope with or overcome the sense of peril which comes with it.

Read in light of the cosmology of *LS,* Francis' reparative alternative provides us with a two-pronged response to this concern. Firstly, his cosmology of encounter makes issues of plurivocity in *credere Deum* issues of plurivocity in *credere in Deum.* This enables an openness to the possibility of plurivocity, following the argument of the last two chapters. However, mere openness to the possibility does not, on its own, enable us to recognise that possibility, insofar as it does not require us to accept indeterminacy in the face of potentially more compelling fears. This leads us to the second prong of our response: Francis' cosmology is

bound up with an associated eschatology that promises reconciliation and fulfilment therein. This provides a narrative of hope which enables unresolved disagreement to be born painlessly, rather than feared as threatening. This undercuts the self-defensive impulse which can underpin paranoid hermeneutics, thereby enabling us to trust in the possibility of plurivocity. We will now turn to this in more detail.

2. PRONG ONE: *CREDERE DEUM* AS *CREDERE IN DEUM*

The first prong of our response employs the Marian priority of chapter four as the basis for a reading of disagreement in *credere Deum.* In chapter four, we argued that Francis sets out an ecclesiology in which the 'Petrine' institutional forms of the Church must follow the historical realities of the 'Marian' encounter that lies at the heart of faith. This enables plurivocity in the form of the Church, corresponding to the historical pluralism of its Marian dimension. We will argue below that *LS* shows how this narrative can be used to understand pluralism not merely of *credere in Deum,* but of *credere Deum.* We will argue, following the last chapter, that *LS* provides an understanding of *credere Deum* as inextricable from *credere in Deum.* We will then argue that *LS* gives examples of instances in which *credere Deum* is conditioned by *credere in Deum.* In doing so, it provides the basis for an account of variation in *credere Deum* as variation in *credere in Deum,* and thus its justification by the arguments of chapter four.

In our fifth chapter, we saw how the Marian priority of chapter four is reflected in our understanding of ecclesial unity. This understanding must likewise follow the historical reality of that unity, which always has the capacity to unsettle it. In the previous chapter, we saw how this pattern is repeated with regards to knowledge of creation in general: it is only in light of our *relation* to God that we truly know creation. Consequently, this knowledge is relativized to that *relation*.

This means that different relationships can potentially reveal different facets of the world: variation in the former can potentially lead to variation in the latter. We find this insight reflected in *LS* itself: in the last chapter, we saw how *LS* integrates our *relation* with God and our relation with creatures in such a way as to render the former the condition of all knowledge. This means that we cannot know the world except as in relation to God, as *encountered* by us.

LS provides two substantive examples of what this means in practice. These can be found in its recognition of spirituality as the basis for theology, and in its contextual hermeneutic of

tradition. Together, they illustrate how *credere Deum* can arise from *credere in Deum.* Moreover, they do so in a way that shows how variation in the former can arise from variation in the latter.

Firstly, Francis affords what might be described as a hermeneutical priority to spirituality in theology. Writing in chapter six, Francis offers "a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality" (*LS* §216):

> **More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone… without an "interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity".**
>
> (*LS* §216)[152]

Here, Francis draws a familiar distinction between a holistic understanding of the spiritual life, and what *GE* would refer to as a 'gnostic' intellectualism (see *GE* §37).

> **Admittedly, Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us.**
>
> (*LS* §216)

In making this distinction, Francis identifies his "spirituality" with a holistic, existentially engaged way of life. In short, his ecological spirituality is not merely a theory about the world, to be held in abstraction; it is a way of being in the world defined by "communion". This spirituality invigorates the doctrine which exhorts us to protect the earth, providing the "interior impulse" that gives it force.[153] In other words, Francis recognises here that the *credere Deum* that thematises our responsibilities towards the earth is only intelligible as authoritative and motivating (that is, as doctrine) in light of a particular permutation of *credere in Deum.*[154] By extension, he offers a renewal of *credere in Deum* as the basis for one

[152] Francis here quotes *EG* §261.

[153] In this vein, Sedmak describes the purpose of the encyclical as a whole as meeting "the challenge to bridge the gap between convictions and commitments… and a consistent way of life" (2017: 943).

[154] In this vein, Miller describes Francis' appeal to relation in communion as the basis for transformation in our moral understanding of the world in terms of a "serene gaze" (2017: 17). In chapter three, we saw how Francis conceives of *seeing* as a way of *touching* with love, and the primacy he affords to this love in knowledge. The resonances are obvious here.

of *credere Deum* – which is to say, variation of the former as the basis for variation in the latter.

Secondly, Francis affords priority to experience. We see this in the repetition of the above pattern in the structure of the encyclical as a whole, which gives a hermeneutical priority to a broadly secular reading of the ecological crisis. This serves to provides a motivating experiential basis for engaging with the tradition later in the encyclical.

Francis begins the encyclical by "briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis… letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows" (*LS* §15). From the outset, this establishes a contextual dimension to the encyclical's theological contributions. More specifically, the document is contextual in the sense that it responds to a concrete need, which is expressed in more or less secular terms (see *LS* §17-61).[155] This has the effect of drawing a distinction between the context from which the document begins its reflections, and the theology of the document. Francis then uses this as a pragmatic basis for reading the tradition, which he approaches for "some principles… which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent" (*LS* §15).

It would be wrong to say that *LS* attempts to derive a religious ethic from a secular basis: firstly, the terms of its initial analysis are only more or less secular.[156] Moreover, given that the encyclical is "addressed to all people of good will", and argues that theology takes its place among various 'branches' of the sciences and 'forms' of wisdom (*LF* §62), this is perhaps best read in terms of a device for reaching out to an audience that extends beyond the Church. Nevertheless, the structure of the early encyclical has the effect of giving priority to a secular empirical analysis, which then shapes the following reading of tradition. This structure, when read in light of its implicit distinction between context and reflection,[157]

[155] The only explicit exceptions are throwaway lines in *LS* §33, 53, 58, 61. Potentially add to this instances where he obliquely invokes Catholic social teaching in *LS* §23, 25, 28, 48-52, 30, 43, 46, 58; as well as quotations from Church documents in *LS* §52 and §54, which nevertheless employ secular language.

[156] Feehan reverses this to say that Francis' ecological spirituality offers us a religious way of pursuing a "secular agenda" that can be shared beyond the Church (2017: 80).

[157] In this vein, Annett reads *LS* as an instalment in a tradition of contextually-grounded social encyclicals (2017: 161). Likewise, Prabhu (2015: 81) compares the contextual methodology of *LS* to that of Liberation Theology, and Irwin compares it to Cardinal Cardijn's "see, judge, act" process as used by Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* §236 (2016: 95).

gives a corresponding priority to context over reflection. In other words, what the encyclical teaches about God follows from the way in which we inhabit our context of ecological crisis.

This contextual hermeneutic of tradition is also exemplified by Francis' discussion of anthropocentrism. In this, he gives a covert nod to the development of the tradition, writing: "**In our time,** the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings" (*LS* §69; emphasis mine). We can read this acknowledgment as a rejoinder to White's influential argument that medieval Christianity established a dualism of humanity and nature, under which nature was available to be exploited "in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (1967: 156).[158] By qualifying his reading of the tradition in this way, Francis indicates that the Church's understanding of the nature of creation, and our responsibilities towards it, has developed from the medieval paradigm identified by White.[159] Francis does this as part of an effort to "to show how faith convictions can offer Christians… ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters" (*LS* §64), which in turn takes its place in the overarching project of the encyclical. Here, Francis thus explicitly reinterprets (in the sense of taking part in an ongoing re-interpretation of) the tradition in light of the context of the ecological crisis.[160]

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[158] Prabhu (2013: 82) also makes this link. Miller notes that White endorses St. Francis of Assisi as a model for a less ecologically destructive Christianity, and that Francis' attention to St. Francis can also be read in terms of this response (2017: 16), as does Erickson (2015: 89). Henning (2015: 44) reads Francis as part of a process of responding to White that began ambivalently with John Paul II; although Irwin stresses continuity between Francis and the three previous Popes (2016: 4-5), as do Pavić and Šundalić – who also identify the White link (2016: 329).

[159] McDonagh reads *LS* more generally as re-emphasising themes in the tradition that are more affirming of the body and creatures. He contrasts this with the Hellenic hierarchical dualism of spirit and body in early Christianity (*c.f.* Johnson (2015)), medieval association of the world with suffering and death after the Black Death, as well as the strongly anthropocentric soteriologies of early modernity (2017: 12-15). Thompson finds in *LS* a similar Thomist affirmation of nature (2016: 752), and Edwards reads Francis' conception of nature as revelatory of the divine as "a return to a traditional view, associated with Bonaventure, among others" (2016a: 8).

However, Edwards also reads Francis' affirmation of the "intrinsic value" of nonhuman creatures with less of a hermeneutic of continuity, describing it as "a real development in church teaching" (2016a: 8). Ruether picks up on the soteriological contrast identified by Black, similarly describing Francis' incorporation of all creation into his vision of salvation as a "notable development" (2015: 20). Feehan (2017: 57-8) likewise contrasts *LS* in this to the anthropocentrism of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and their contemporary heirs. However, he also sees in *LS*' concern for biodiversity parallels with an alternative sensibility in Aquinas (*c.f. Summa Theologiae* I, q. 47, a. 1.; *Summa Contra Gentiles,* II, XLV) (2017: 68-9).

These developments are not uncontroversial. Van den Heuvel (2018) critiques Francis' turn from anthropocentrism as theologically inadequate, also noting that anthropocentrism itself permits more nuance than the broad strokes in which Francis rejects it.

[160] Castillo claims that Francis' theological attention to the human-earth relationship as a theological topic in its own right, rather than the background to other relationships, constitutes a novel

LS does not specifically identify this context as one of faith. However, it is an experiential, practical, and existential one, and therefore includes the pre-doctrinal spirituality articulated above: it is a context in which God is encountered and 'believed in'. In short, it is a context which includes *credere in Deum,* and prioritising it means giving hermeneutical priority to *credere in Deum* over *credere Deum.* In this vein, the ecological crisis of today, and the *credere in Deum* which emerges within it, provides the basis for the development of (that is, variation in) *credere Deum.*

In short, these examples show how plurivocity in *credere Deum* can be understood as arising from plurivocity in *credere in Deum.* The upshot of this is that our reflections about plurivocity in *credere in Deum* also apply to plurivocity in *credere Deum.* Different outlooks with regards to doctrinal issues can be read in terms of an expression of the plurivocal unity of faith, rather than a sign of deviation from that unity. This opens the possibility for this alterity to be read as an expression of variation in true faith, thereby equipping us to approach difference with a hopeful outlook.

In the language of our fourth chapter, reading these differences as differences in form, rather than in terms of the discursive agreement and disagreement which arises from them equips us to approach variation in *credere Deum* along the same lines as variation in doctrinal form: differences in belief can potentially be read as differences in the *form* of belief, justified by their facilitation of encounter with God. In the language of our fifth chapter, we might say that the unity of beliefs which make up the proper doctrine of the Church is one that has the capacity to unsettle the ideas which seek to *determine* it. This is not exactly the same as saying that the unity of the truth, to which these beliefs tend, bears up a similar transcendence over our ideas of unity. However, if the unity of belief proper to the Church ultimate conforms to the unity of the truth (which is not a controversial idea), then presupposing this, any actual transcendence of the unity of that belief in this way indicates a corresponding transcendence in the unity of the truth. As a result, we can view difference

development of the tradition in itself (2017: 98-100). In a similar vein, O'Halloran (2018) reads *LS* as developing through clarifying Vatican II's ambiguously cosmic vision by specifically incorporating the whole of creation into the drama of redemption. A similar point is made by McDonagh (2017: 9-10) and Visick (2015: 411). More ambivalently, Thompson reads *LS* from the perspective of a more straightforward Thomism. In the course of this, he (dubiously) argues that Francis' vision of creation resembling the Godhead constitutes a restatement of Aquinas' claim that the lower orders of nature are untouched by sin and therefore *not* incorporated into this redemption, thereby mitigating this novelty somewhat (2016: 752), although he employs his reading to extend natural law theory to cover ecology in a different novel development.

in this context as an expression of legitimate variation of form within the Church, rather than a deviation either from the proper unity of the Church's belief or the truth itself.

3. PRONG TWO: HOPE IN RECONCILIATION

There is, however, a further problem: merely recognising the possibility of this variation does not enable us to read any given instance of variation in these terms. Merely being able to recognise the possibility of a hopeful reading does not in itself enable the hope that would motivate this reading.

LS also supplies a solution here. We will begin to explore this by looking more closely at the nature of the problem, returning to Sedgwick's original Kleinian typology in order to understand it. We will then argue that *LS* invokes an eschatological vision of reconciliation in which disagreement can be viewed as non-threatening. Finally, we will explore how *LS* presents this in terms of a Eucharistic temporality, in which disagreement appears as comic. This in turn enables a security that provides the basis for a hopeful, rather than fearful, reading of disagreement.

3.1. ANXIETY AND PARANOIA

The response in *VS* to epistemological crisis reproduces an affective-epistemological dynamic which becomes associated with paranoid hermeneutics when we read Sedgwick's typology with closer attention to its Kleinian roots. Sedgwick identifies paranoid hermeneutics with Klein's paranoid-schizoid position. According to Klein, this position is a way of relating to objects which corresponds to a stage in childhood development. This stage is characterised by anxiety, which arises in response to self-destructive impulses or the "Death Instinct". This anxiety is "felt as fear of annihilation (death)". This fear becomes attached to an object, which leads to its being felt as "fear of an uncontrollable overpowering object". This object is the mother, who, through a process of "splitting", is reconstituted by the infant in terms of part-objects: a good, nurturing breast; and a bad, threatening breast towards which this fear is directed, and which correspondingly becomes the object of aggression (Klein, 1996: 166). Hence the position manifests in a "terrible alertness to the dangers posed by the hateful and envious part-objects that one defensively projects into, carves out of, and ingests from the world around one", which Sedgwick identifies as the dominant characteristic of her 'paranoid' hermeneutics (Sedgwick, 2003: 128). We might elaborate on this to say a paranoid hermeneutic enacts an analogous process of splitting: as a theory of negative affect, it *determines* its objects so as to be threats; while its strong-theoretical aspects establishes the

connection between fear and objects as such, enabling the attachment of the former to the latter.

By contrast, reparative hermeneutics are associated with the depressive position (Sedgwick, 2003: 128). This position, according to Klein, corresponds to the next stage of child development, in which the child integrates their image of the mother, recombining the part-objects that were split in the prior stage. This leads to feelings of guilt, as the child comes to recognise that the aggression previously directed at the 'bad' part-objects was truly directed at the 'good' mother. This engenders a "drive to repair or protect the injured object" (Sedgwick, 2003: 172). In this regard, we might gloss the depressive position as embodying a shift from a paranoid-schizoid fear for the self, to a fear for the harmed object.

We noted in our first chapter that our use of Sedgwick's typology is primarily descriptive, rather than explanatory; we are not seeking to psychoanalyse 'paranoid' Catholic theologians! However, what attending to this psychoanalytic background does show is a deeper relationship between hermeneutical choice and affect than is captured in the claim that paranoid hermeneutics are theories of negative affect. Klein's typology indicates that the link between anxiety and paranoid hermeneutics is not unilateral; it is not merely that paranoid hermeneutics identify threats. Rather, it is also the case that one potential motivating factor for adopting a paranoid hermeneutic is anxiety, or response to a perceived threat.

This is reflected in Sedgwick's description of paranoid hermeneutics as reflexive and mimetic: paranoia understands its objects by reproducing them, this understanding itself is only understood through the adoption of that paranoia (2003: 131). To put it another way, paranoid hermeneutics presuppose a prior defensive stance that validates paranoia's theory of negative affect. This is confirmed in the case of *VS,* which offers a paranoid *response to a perceived threat* posed by dangerous alterity in moral theology.

To put it more simply: paranoid hermeneutics are motivating to the extent that the subject already feels uneasy about their object, as we are more likely to opt for an account which assesses something as a threat if we are open to perceiving it as one. Correspondingly, if a reparative alternative is to be compelling, it needs to be accompanied by something which alleviates this anxiety. The second prong of our response addresses this concern, looking to Francis' theology of the Eucharist as the basis for this consolation. In short, in *LS,* the Eucharist inserts us into an eschatological temporality which imbues conflict with the

promise of resolution. This enables us to take a stance towards it which is fundamentally *comic,* reading it in joy and hope rather than with self-protective fear.

3.2. ESCHATOLOGY AND RECONCILIATION

LS builds on its cosmology of encounter to present us with an eschatological vision that is fundamentally one of reconciliation.[161] Firstly, Francis finds the origins of all creation in harmonious communion, writing that the narrative of creation in genesis establishes "that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself"; a state recovered in part by St. Francis' of Assisi's communion with nature. However, this original "harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation" was "disrupted" by sin, becoming "conflictual" (LS §66).

However, Francis is ultimately hopeful. He writes that "[t]he ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God… all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things" (*LS* §83).

This passage highlights two important themes. Firstly, this reconciliation can be read in terms of *relation*, in the 'embrace' of communion with God. In this vein, the Trinitarian resemblance of creation means that it finds its fulfilment in communion with both other creatures and God:

> **The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created.**
>
> (*LS* §240)

Secondly, in this communion, we are 'reconciled' in truth: the nature of creation will be 'illumined'. Hence Francis also writes: "At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God… and be able to read… the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude" (*LS* §243). This makes sense in the context of Francis' metaphysics of *relation*: insofar as our destiny in this relation involves communion with other creatures, our eschatological destiny is also one of encounter (analogous or otherwise) with other creatures. Because the being(-in-*relation*) of creatures arises from, and finds its

[161] This gives a double meaning to the phrase, "our common home", which takes on eschatological resonances (Grey: 5).

fulfilment in, relation with God, their destination in *relation* with God represents the fullest realisation of their nature. Consequently, our encounter with creatures in our eschatological destination is an encounter with them in their fullest nature.[162]

This eschatology of reconciliation allows us to read Francis' four principles in *EG* in a cosmic register. *EG* presents them as "related to constant tensions present in every social reality", and able therein to "guide the development of life in society and the building of a people where differences are harmonized within a shared pursuit" (*EG* §221). That is, they are fundamentally concerned with reconciliation. However, they are also eschatological: Francis' first principle, "*[t]ime is greater than space",* enjoins us to approach social tensions in light of the tension between the limited possibilities of the present, and the "fullness" of "the greater, brighter horizon of the utopian future as the final cause which draws us to itself" (*EG* §222). This enables us to give priority to "processes", rather than succumbing to the impatient desire to have everything in the present (*EG* §223). This principle is thus predicated upon an eschatological statement about the promise of future fulfilment, which in turn enables us to accept the limitations of the present in hope. This can be read as undergirding the forward-looking aspects of his other three principles.[163]

Francis' second principle, *"[u]nity prevails over conflict*", enjoins us to look for a resolution to conflict which "takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides" (*EG* §228). In the context of conflict, it exhorts us to avoid negating any party by *totalising* another's position in, or account of, that conflict (Verstraeten, 2016: 109). This is achieved within a patient logic of 'time': it is the product of "a way of making history"; an ongoing process in which "tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity", rather than being negated by premature resolution (*EG* §228). Likewise, this principle relies on an explicitly eschatological vision, reminding us "that Christ has made all things one in himself". It thus seeks "peace", which is the "sign of this unity and reconciliation of all things in him" (*EG* §229). This vision directly speaks against the easy resolution of conflict in "a negotiated settlement". Rather, it aims towards the fulfilment of all, and is motivated in

[162] This includes an ethical relation to creation. Hence we can follow Kauffman *et al.*'s description of the hope for an eco-friendly world as a hope for "transcendence" (2015: 231).

[163] In this vein, Lane argues that Francis' relational ontology locates human development and fulfilment in dialogue with others (2017: 39-40). This establishes language as constitutive of our being (2017: 41-2); something which resonates with Francis' analogy between the Church and speaking communities in *LF* (§38), which we saw in chapter four.

this by the "conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity" (*EG* §230).

Francis' fourth principle gives another image of the unity sought by Francis' second principle. This principle is "*[t]he whole is greater than the part*", and it reminds us to balance both global and local perspectives, reducing neither to the other. Part of this involves recognising that, while "the whole is greater than the parts", it is also "greater than the sum of its parts" (*EG* §235). This particularly applies to the Gospel, which addresses everyone (*EG* §237), and cannot be reduced to "limited and particular questions" on subject particular to only a few (*EG* §235). Francis illustrates this with the image of a polyhedron, which is composed from a unity of multiple facets, but cannot be reduced to them; and in which each local point is included in the peaceable, plural justice of 'equidistance' from the global centre (*EG* §236).

Finally, Francis' third principle is "*[r]ealities are more important than ideas*". This principle exhorts us to reject the idealist schemas of "formal nominalism", and instead seek "harmonious objectivity" (*EG* §232). This principle is eschatological in the sense that it requires us to attend to history: we must recognise and respect the role of the Church in salvation history, the historical specificities of its life, and to "put the word into practice" (*EG* §233).

In short, these four principles illustrate a vision of promised social reconciliation, achieved through a historical process which must recognise, and which embraces everyone without negation through either exclusion or homogenisation. Francis' eschatology of reconciliation in *LS* repeats this in a cosmic register: we find our fulfilment in communion with creation, in *relation* to God. This communion is one in which each creature is incorporated, and each nature is fully realised, correcting the divisive disruptions of sin. In doing so, *LS* confirms the hopeful social vision of *EG:* the cosmic reconciliation of creation in God incorporates the social reconciliation of differences.[164]

[164] In this vein, Vogel (2015) reads the vision of *LS* as directing us towards legal reforms that will enable better relation to one another and creation. Parker also reads it as directing us towards similar reforms within the Church, in pursuit of an "eco-ecclesiology" (2015: 318-321). Silecchia recognises this when he reads *LS* as calling for a "social love" (*c.f. LS* §231, 228) that expresses personal love for God in public life and institutions (2015: 397).

3.3. PROMISE AND EUCHARISTIC TEMPORALITY

What is significant about this cosmic register is that *LS* explicitly treats it in light of themes of *promise.* Francis writes that the New Testament depicts the risen Christ as "present throughout creation by his universal Lordship" (*LS* §100). This

> **leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that "God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.**
>
> (LS §100)

In short, this eschatological perspective renders creation a site of encounter with God, and specifically *as* the eschatological destination of creation. Here, the "fullness", which Francis' first principle in *EG* identifies as the "final cause", is encountered anew in creation *as* the promise of its reconciliation in that fullness.

For Francis, the Eucharist is the site of this encounter and the realisation of this communion *par excellence*. Francis writes that "[i]n the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God… The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration" (*LS* §236).

Pickstock reads the Eucharist in a similar way. In doing so, she identifies a process of *repetition* in which the present moment is constituted by different instantiations of a promised future in eternity. For Pickstock, this occurs in the Liturgy, which constitutes the Church that performs it within a Eucharistic temporality oriented towards the fulfilment prefigured in the sacrament. This process is mirrored in the Eucharistic theology of *LS:* for Francis, the Eucharist inserts the Church within a temporality in which the eschatological promise prefigured in the Eucharist governs its reading of time. This in turn provides the Church with a narrative for disagreement that is fundamentally *comic,* reading it in the context of eschatological fulfilment in communion.

Pickstock follows de Lubac's[165] well-known genealogy of the *corpus mysticum* in order to frame this. De Lubac traces an historical theological shift around the relationship between the historical, sacramental, and the ecclesial bodies of Christ. Originally, the sacramental and ecclesial bodies were associated in their conception as the enactment of an event originally occurring in the historical body of Christ, and continued in the reception of the sacramental body, which also caused the individual to be received into the ecclesial body. In this context, 'mystical' applied equally to the sacramental body and the Church, insofar as they were both mutually constituted within the sacrament: the Church was unified through its reception of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist "signified the Church... as that in and by which it was received, and which attested to it through its *essential* manifestation of unity". In this vein, it was precisely *because* the mystical body of the Church was considered a reality that the Eucharist was conceived as an effective sign rather than merely a symbol (Pickstock, 1998: 159).

However, in the late middle-ages, the historical and the sacramental bodies became more closely associated, and the ecclesial body relegated to an invisible extension. Pickstock understands this shift in terms of the loss of a temporal dimension to sacramental presence, and the adoption of a spatialising logic. To put it simply, this modern understanding emphasised the Eucharist's bringing about a particular state of affairs in the present (the presence of the historical body in the specific location of the altar).

In contrast, the pre-modern conception emphasised an economy in which the Eucharist communicates the divine within the present, thereby inserting the Church into an eschatological temporality defined by relation to the eternal reality of Christ's saving action (Pickstock, 1998: 160). Pickstock describes this communication in terms of "non-identical repetition" of the mystical reality through the eucharistic sign (1998: 160). She draws this term from Kierkegaard,[166] whom she reads as drawing a contrast between Platonic *recollection* and Christian *repetition*. In this, recollection is portrayed as a backward-looking movement that seeks to recover a past that is understood as entirely separate from the moment of recollection. In contrast, for Kierkegaard, Christian repetition is a forward-looking movement in which the moment of repetition is a constitutive part of that which is repeated.

Pickstock disagrees with Kierkegaard in terms of his reading of Plato, whom she reads as presenting a "doxological" philosophy of language that grounds meaning in a quasi-

[165] *C.f.* de Lubac (2006)
[166] *C.f.* Kierkegaard (1983)

sacramental encounter with the divine (2008: xviii); a reading which seems to "close the gap" between Plato and Christianity opened by Kierkegaard (Pickstock, 1998: 269). Rather, she uses Kierkegaard's distinction to understand the difference between pre-modern and modern understandings of sacramental signs. Hence, she notes, under modernity, the historical tradition of the Church that celebrates the Eucharist ceased to be understood as a matter of participating in an eschatology. Instead, it became conceived in terms of "a code or law" that preserved the essence of an historical presence, securing it in the present through recollection in its statutes (Pickstock, 1998: 160).[167] Moreover, in representing the Church, the host on the altar made this presence visible - and this making-visible becoming the *raison d'être* of the Church, rather than the sacramental communication of the eternal in the liturgy. The Church thus became "the place where invisible authority is made legible (the read historical accounts) or manifested (the totalized visibility of the sacrament), or both together" (Pickstock, 1998: 161).

In contrast, she writes, the pre-modern understanding "laid stress on the contemporary continuity between the act of receiving the eucharistic Body and being received *by* and *as* the ecclesial "body"" (Pickstock, 1998: 159). That is, it conceived of the Church as both the cause and effect of the Eucharist – to quote de Lubac, "the Church produces the Eucharist but the Eucharist also produces the Church" (1999: 133). This "opened the space of liturgy" to incorporate a temporal dimension spanning the sweep of history from "the apostolic historic origins to the present ecclesial moment, and ever onwards" (Pickstock, 1998: 159). Here, the Church becomes "the realization in time of a mystery", constituted by the sacramental *repetition* of the eschaton in the different celebrations of the Eucharist (1998: 160).

The metaphysics of *relation* in *LS* recovers this pre-modern theology of the Eucharist as *repetition*. We have seen above how, for Francis, the Eucharist is the site of encounter with God as eschatological fullness. Because the nature of creation finds its fulfilment in this fullness, creation is encountered as fulfilled within this communion, thereby illuminating it. Moreover, insofar as Francis' reading of Genesis situates the origins of creation in this same

[167] Pickstock argues for an understanding of language based upon the function of the signs in the Eucharist, which she describes as "doxological" (1998: xiii): for Pickstock, meaning is grounded in the activity of praise of the divine, which serves to communicate the divine to the speaker and hearer, rather than merely representing truth as the means of recollection. Likewise, in chapter four, we saw how Francis prioritises the role of doctrinal forms as a site of encounter with God, rather than as merely codifying precepts. This might be read as recognising the possibility of a doxological reading of language, which is similarly grounded in a sacramental economy within the Church that we explored as his 'Marian priority'.

communion, which is repaired in the Eucharist, in presenting that destiny the Eucharist also presents the origin of creation as related to it. For Francis, the Eucharist thus also opens up a temporal dimension within the liturgy, inserting the Church into a unique temporality.

As with Pickstock, this temporality is oriented around the origins of the Church. In *LF* §44 he writes that the Eucharist is "an encounter with Christ truly present in the supreme act of his love, the life-giving gift of himself". Here, he thus portrays the Eucharist in terms of a communication of origins in the Passion. Hence the passage continues to discuss it in a way that almost completely reproduces Pickstock's reading:

> **In the Eucharist we find the intersection of faith's two dimensions. On the one hand, there is the dimension of history: the Eucharist is an act of remembrance, a making present of the mystery in which the past, as an event of death and resurrection, demonstrates its ability to open up a future, to foreshadow ultimate fulfilment.**

We can read this as an extension of the Christology of *LF*, in which Christ is the "supreme manifestation" of God's love (*LF* §15). This theme is transposed into a eucharistic register when Francis identifies this manifestation specifically with Christ's sacrifice, writing that "[t]he clearest proof of the reliability of Christ's love is to be found in his dying for our sake" (*LF* §16), and that "Christ's death discloses the utter reliability of God's love above all in the light of his resurrection" (*LF* §17). It is this identification of Eucharist as love which underpins the Eucharistic temporality of *LF,* insofar as it enables us to view the future in an eschatological context: in realising how God "is so close to us that he entered into human history", we are able "to grasp reality's deepest meaning and to see how much God loves this world and is constantly guiding it towards himself" (*LF* §18).

For *LF,* the origins encountered in the Eucharist lie in Christ's sacrifice. In contrast, *LS* develops this theme of divine 'closeness' in order to extend the sweep of Eucharistic temporality back to original creation, thereby translating it into a specifically cosmological register. Francis describes the communion of creation and God in the Eucharist in terms of closeness: in the Eucharist, God chooses to "reach our intimate depths", such that he "comes not from above, but from within". However, this closeness is cosmic: "[t]he Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation" (*LS* §236); and participating in it is "an act of cosmic love" (*LS* §236) that is "celebrated on the altar of the world" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* §438; quoted in *LS* §236). In doing so, the love that provides the foundation of the Eucharistic temporality of *LF,* and which *LF* finds embodied in this closeness, becomes revealed not so much in Christ's Passion and Resurrection themselves as in the communion

that they expressed and restored. This is not to say *LS* loses the Christocentrism of *LF*. It is "[j]oined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist" that "the whole cosmos gives thanks to God" (*LS* §236). However, it becomes contextualised within a wider sweep of cosmic history. Christ as encountered in the Eucharist is the supreme, revelatory expression of divine love as realised in cosmic communion.[168]

In short, in the Eucharist, we are not merely presented with Christ's sacrifice. Rather, we are presented with the closeness expressed in the incarnation as realised on a cosmic scale, in the communion of all creation. In doing so, the Eucharist incorporates within itself the promise of reconciliation presented by *EG* when read through the cosmology of *LS.* This enables that promise to have a relativizing effect on historical conflict: within Eucharistic temporality, into which we are inserted by *repetition* in the Eucharist, historical conflict is always eschatologically directed towards a promised reconciliation. This relativization enables us to view that conflict as indicative of the promise, which is found in the creatures that it illuminates.

This discovery of promise in conflict, imparts a certain narrative structure to conflict itself - and it is this narrative which serves to console anxiety in the face of conflict. In the next section, we will see how Eucharistic temporality is one in which conflict must be viewed in the context of a 'contradiction' with its eventual resolution, which can even occur *through* those conflicts, as the material of history. This means that those conflicts themselves become *comic,* but in a fundamentally hopeful way that incorporates a clear vision of this redemptive context; one in which even the most difficult tensions can find themselves, bizarrely, the vehicles of grace. Viewed in this way, conflict can cease to be threatening, becoming instead the object of a hope that finds salvation in the oddest places.

3.4. COMEDY

As with Pickstock's theology of the Eucharist as *repetition*, Kierkegaard also provides our foil for understanding the narrative structure of Francis' Eucharistic temporality, and its relation to our guiding concern around alterity and threat. This is the theory of *comedy* that he

[168] This contrast is perhaps also why *LS* emphasises the link between the Eucharist and the risen Christ, but has little to say about the Cross: although commentators such as Gruber (2017a) focus on the ecclesiological implications of the cosmic-ecological aspects of *LS*, Francis' concern here is ultimately a cosmological one, in which the apostolic origins of the Church in specific historical events are relatively less significant than in the ecclesiologically-minded *LF*. Of course, the two readings of the Eucharist are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, *LS* might be read as deepening the ecclesiology of *LF:* whereas *LF* identifies the origins of the Church in the life of Christ, in *LS,* the Eucharist also reveals the Church's cosmic origin in the act of creation itself.

presents under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus, in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.[169] Reading eucharistic temporality in dialogue with Climacus brings the narrative structure found in Francis' eschatology of reconciliation into contact with issues of affectivity, revealing how it enables us to approach the failure of reconciliation in the present in a joyful and hopeful way.

At the heart of Climacus' theory of comedy is an understanding of human life as characterised by a contradiction or "incongruity" (Lippitt, 2000: 10) between God and creation. This contradiction falls along lines of divine infinitude against created finitude, and divine absoluteness before which creation is relative.

The distinction between comedy and tragedy in this context lies in the manner in which it bears this contradiction. Climacus writes:

> **The comic apprehension evokes the contradiction or makes it manifest by having in mind the way out, which is why the contradiction is painless. The tragic apprehension sees the contradiction and despairs of a way out.**
>
> (Kierkegaard, 1941: 463)

To put it differently, the ridicule of the comic is a hopeful ridicule, which serves as the instance for transcendence of the situation in which the contradiction arises.[170] In contrast, tragedy faces this contradiction in despair.

This humour takes on two forms. The first is a mode of approaching suffering. This is predicated on the awareness that the contradiction entails the impossibility of attaining one's ultimate happiness, and hence the inescapability of suffering (1941: 401). This renders any talk of the particular or relative sufferings arising from the frustration of worldly desire "superfluous", insofar as their satisfaction will never alleviate the true, absolute suffering in life (Kierkegaard, 1846: 402). Likewise, it recognises the inadequacy of any particular act in achieving this happiness – for example, in kneeling to pray (Lippitt, 2000: 94). This superfluity

[169] The relationship between Kierkegaard's various pseudonyms, as well as between them and Kierkegaard as an author, is complex (*c.f.* Golomb (1992)). We are using Climacus' theory in an ad-hoc way here, without wider systematic relation to the authorial figure of Kierkegaard himself, or any of the other pseudonyms under which he writes.

[170] Climacus notes that the lower cannot make the higher ridiculous, although bringing something higher into relation with something lower "may make the relationship ridiculous". Thus, he writes, "it is possible for a horse to be the occasion for a man showing himself in a ridiculous light, but the horse has no power to make him ridiculous" (Kierkegaard, 1941: 463).

and inadequacy expresses the ultimate incongruity of the contradiction between God and creation, and it is this incongruity which serves as the matter for humour.

The second is specifically "religious humour". This humour turns on what Climacus calls *guilt consciousness.* Guilt consciousness is a feature of pagan religion, and refers to the awareness that one's very capacity to fail to meet the demand of the infinite renders one guilty, which in turn makes even redemption (as a change relative to this capacity) the condition of one's guilt. Guilt-consciousness thus realises the absolute "totality of guilt", as a quality of existence in general (Kierkegaard, 1941: 471). In revealing the essential nature of guilt to existence, guilt consciousness thus indicates the impossibility of relation to the infinite by anything other than the relation of consciousness of one's guilt before it. This in turn means that the pagan is trapped: their only relation to the infinite is through their guilt, which is their inability to attain it. This means that both relating to and attaining the infinite become mutually exclusive, rendering its attainment impossible (1941: 472-3).

Religious humour juxtaposes one's guilt relative to specific acts and measures with one's absolute or total guilt, against which it appears trivial. Climacus compares this to figures running around in panic on a sinking ship: "the contradiction is that in spite of all this movement they do not move away from the place where the destruction is" (Kierkegaard, 1846: 493).

Francis' Eucharistic temporality is comic, albeit not in a way that completely reproduces these schemata. Firstly, the *contradiction* upon which its comedy turns is different to that figured by Climacus: for Climacus, recognition of the contradiction entails the realisation that God is not to be identified with any good in the external world. The infinite, in its distinction from the finite, is "abstract" and "aesthetically poverty-stricken"; unable to fulfil the kinds of desires elicited by worldly objects (Kierkegaard, 1941: 353). This in turn reduces relation to the infinite to something entirely inwards. Francis, by contrast, holds that we encounter both God and this reconciliation in the communion of the Eucharist.[171] In other words, he does not recognise Kierkegaard's *distinction* between God and the world; we encounter God *in* the world, in the Eucharist (and, as argued in chapter four, through other *forms* as well).

[171] Climacus here would criticise this claim as a ridiculous misdirected "absolute dedication to a relative telos" (Kierkegaard, 1941: 377-8). Milbank (1996) offers an alternative reading of Kierkegaard that both contests his restriction of religious pathos to interiority, and also his refusal of mediation. This reading lends itself to a more unproblematic reading of Francis via Kierkegaard. However, Milbank's reading is not concerned with comedy. Given that we are not interested in redeeming Kierkegaard for Catholic theology so much as illustrating something about Francis to do with comedy, a more straightforward reading of the *Postcript* serves us better here.

What we have instead are the *horizons* of the third chapter, expressed in a practical as well as epistemological register: in the Eucharist, we *do* achieve *actual, positive* relation to the infinite and the reconciliation therein. The contradiction instead lies in our ability to achieve the fullness of this relation in our limitation, either by thematising it (as problematised in our third chapter), or by achieving reconciliation or mediation of difference (and thematising it, as problematised in our fifth chapter).

This also means that the object of comedy in Eucharistic temporality is different. Climacus' humour turns on the incongruity between finite or relative passion, and the absoluteness or inescapability of suffering before the infinite; or finite or relative guilt, and the total or absolute guilt before the infinite. In contrast, Francis' eschatology establishes a contradiction between the "social tensions" of present limitation (which we have associated with alterity, disagreement, and the failure of mediation in epistemological crisis), and the future reconciliation encountered within the Eucharistic communion. In short, for Climacus, humour lies in the triviality of the finite in the face of the infinite. For Francis, however, humour lies in the importance of finite struggles in the face of ultimate consolation, and the contradiction therein with their difficulty; *that* we must persist in the absurdity of limitation today *because* it finds its fulfilment tomorrow.[172] This 'Eucharistic' humour is essentially joyful, showing the way out of the contradiction not through negation of the finite, but in the promise of its fulfilment.[173] For example, Francis encourages evangelizers to embrace "the smell of the sheep" (*EG* §24) and being "soiled by the mud of the street" (*EG* §45). These two images, which metaphorically express closeness to peoples' lives and the difficulties involved in relating to Others respectively, portray a Church that is *undignified*: it has become smelly and dirty in the course of its work. However, he can deploy these images precisely because he is certain of a deeper dignity that remains is unshaken by these superficial embarassments. The contradiction that they express is not one in which the Church's muckiness becomes trivial in light of its transcendent orientation. Rather, it attains a new level of importance and dignity, and this is what is funny.[174]

[172] This difference is important. Climacus notes that that if there is no contradiction if there is some "positive definition" that prevents the finite being negated (Kierkegaard, 1846: 493). Hence Francis' comedy sustains contradiction by shifting its location

[173] In this vein, Irwin reads Francis' Eucharistic theology as installing liturgical celebration at the heart of any process of theological reflection, reminding us both of the object of our hope, but also the reality of contemporary need for redemption (2016: 238-240).

[174] Contrast this with John Paul II's request that journalists stop referring to the papal car as the "popemobile" because it was "undignified" (in Stone, 2008: Online). Here, John Paul accurately reads the name as parodically identifying a contradiction between the Church and its purported dignity.

3.5. SECURITY

This hope, moreover, is a secure one. Climacus' religious humour, and Francis' Eucharistic humour, differ in that the former despairs of a way out of contradiction whereas the latter does not. For both, contradiction is ubiquitous to human life. However, Francis' Eucharistic temporality transforms conflict from a threat to communion into its negative face, intelligible only as painful conflict because it appears against the backdrop of a promised reconciliation. As such, it redeems the tension of this contradiction, transforming it into a hopeful one that bears within itself the seeds of its own overcoming. Thus it provides security even *in* conflict.

Climacus reflects on Paganism, which "has only human nature in general as its assumption" (Kierkegaard, 1846: 496). Paganism is ultimately tragic insofar as awareness of the distinction implies awareness of the ultimate inability of finite humanity to escape suffering and attain the infinite (Lippitt, 2000: 90).

In contrast, Eucharistic temporality is comic precisely because the resolution of the contradiction is contained within itself: limitation stands in tension with fullness *because there is fullness.* It therefore provides us with security, and therein hope: the contradiction between the conflicts of the present and the communion of the future renders those conflicts themselves indicative *not* of the failure of reconciliation, but in fact its inevitability. The Eucharist presents us with the cosmic origins of all beings-in-relation within communion, as well as the promise of their cosmic reconciliation in that same communion. Similarly, in doing so, it illuminates those beings-in-relation such that they are known in light of that origin and promise. Consequently, their relations – *including those relations that are conflictual* – must be read as an expression of a creation that is fundamentally oriented towards reconciliation. That is, it is only because there is a promise of resolution that we feel the contradiction of conflict. As Francis puts it in *EG* §222*,* we "live poised between each individual moment and the greater, brighter horizon of the utopian future as the final cause which draws us to itself". The tension of this 'poise between' is only such *because* there is the pole of fullness, which is a "horizon" precisely because it *does* lie beyond. *Even in the agony of agonism, we encounter the consolation of communion.*

However, he responds to the contradiction as a threat to this dignity. In doing so, he loses touch with the transcendent orientation of the contradiction, in the process disguising it. The result is that the Church itself ceases to be read in light of this orientation, reversing the emphasis of the humour: rather than laughing at how the fulfilment of creation incorporates the popemobile, we now laugh at the ridiculousness of a call for dignity from the man who rides in it.

Moreover, Francis' Eucharistic temporality provides a fundamentally hopeful outlook towards particular historical conflicts. We see this when we contrast Francis' hope with the Christian hope offered by Climacus.

For Climacus, whereas paganism mourns the inability of the finite to attain the infinite, Christianity finds a way beyond this: it recognises that even the contradiction between the finite and infinite, insofar as it is understood, belongs ultimately to the finite. In an extension of the movement of the religious in general, it thus surrenders understanding. Instead, it seizes on the "absurd", in which the infinite, transcending the contradiction, delivers itself over to the finite. In the absurd, Climacus writes, "existence is paradoxically accentuated for the reason that the eternal itself came into the world at a moment of time" (Kierkegaard, 1941: 505). That is, rather than negating the finite before the infinite, the contradiction instead enables the finite to provide a relationship with the eternal through itself: "the eternal is at a definite place" (1941: 506).

Like Francis, then, Climacus' Christianity ultimately finds a way beyond the despair of paganism. However, there is an important distinction between the two. Climacus' Christian is characterised by *sin consciousness,* which is a development of guilt consciousness.

Sin consciousness is consciousness of how the infinite relates the guilty finite to itself. This can only be attained by the finite subject via relation to the infinite in the finite (Kierkegaard, 1941: 474). Climacus claims that the temporally-bound nature of the knowing subject means that the finite objects of knowledge do not possess *being,* as eternal *essences*. Rather, they are only *becoming,* possessing a temporally-bound, empirical *existence* (1941: 169). In this relation to the infinite, however, the finite itself attains the eternity in which the infinite views existence. In doing so, the finite attains an essence, and therein being. "In this way, Climacus writes, "this thing of becoming a Christian begins with the miracle of creation". However, this is paradoxical in itself: "this occurs to one who already is created". That is, one is already existent, and thus must *become* eternal (Kierkegaard, 1941: 510). In this sense, like Francis, Climacus also holds that one's salvation is an expression of one's being. However, for Climacus, this is paradoxically *determined* in the course of one's existence, by divine intervention. That is, while salvation is an expression of one's being, that being is in some sense extrinsic to oneself. To put it differently, the finite can only be saved by its supplementation with this extrinsic condition after the fact of its existence.

In the context of Francis' identification of salvation with reconciliation, this would have a troubling implication: the extrinsic nature of the condition for salvation to creation renders the process of redemption itself something extrinsic to history, arriving from without at the apportioned time. Correspondingly, there is nothing in the conflicts of the present that implies their resolution in the course of history. Instead, we must merely wait for the miraculous arrival of the eschaton for reconciliation. In contrast, Francis' Eucharistic temporality reveals an orientation towards communion at the heart of creation. That is, all creation is intrinsically oriented towards this communion, in which the conflicts of the present will be resolved.[175] As such, for Francis, *all* conflicts are intrinsically resolvable, and tend (as relations-in-being) towards this resolution in history in the course of its redemptive arc.[176]

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[175] This is also why, contrary to readers such as Punch (2015), we do not read Francis as a process theologian: Punch reads Francis' eschatological being-as-relation in terms of "belonging (relationality)" and "becoming (process)" (2015: 85). In contrast, eschatological fulfilment, for Francis, is the realisation of essence as being-in-relation, which is expressed in a less 'fulfilled' (agonic) way prior to grace. Stated in more explicitly non-process, Aristotelian terms, Francis holds that particular relations between beings are accidental expressions of a relational substance that possess the capacity to occupy a range of distinct relations, just as spatially extended substances can occupy distinct positions within that extension. In this context, the eschatological vision of reconciliation is not so much a development in being *as such,* but a change in accidental configuration as individual substances come to be expressed in different relations. In this vein, Thompson (2016: 746) reads the ontology of nature in *LS* as ultimately being one of "a divinely arranged, ordered complex of organic wholes" that provides the basis for a Thomist natural law ethics, albeit one that also speaks in terms of ecology; a "Green Thomism" similarly championed by Cuddeback (2016). Keller also notes that Francis invokes images of divine omnipotence to underpin his critique of reductive anthropocentrism, in contrast to the models of God normally associated with process theology (2015: 181-182). This implies a more classical metaphysics at the heart of Francis' apophaticism.

Nevertheless, there are thematic continuities between Francis as we read him and process theology, which indicate a possible *rapprochement* between the two. These include the emphasis on relation and temporality identified by Punch, but also a holistic vision of knowledge (Riffert, 2015: 418-419); a scepticism of reduction and a view of "reciprocal relation" between systems and parts which requires an integral view of society and ecology (Bracken, 2015: 422-423), or anthropology more generally (Petrov, 2015: 427-428); and the endorsement of a holistic, relational hermeneutic predicated upon an ontology to match this (Teixeira, 2015: 435). In this vein, Shields notes that process philosophy is a wide-ranging field, and contrasts a narrow definition centring around pragmatist and Whiteheadian versions (which he admittedly identifies with process theology), with a "broad" definition which he explicitly identifies as encompassing Aristotelianism (2009: 128). This offers a bridge between 'classical' and 'process' theology. Finally, Francis' refusal of *totality, determination* and *absoluteness* in his knowledge of creatures defies the kind of totalising approach we might associate with 'classical' Thomism, channelling a sensibility perhaps more readily found in process theologians (and which relatively conservative 'Green Thomists' might find troubling).

[176] The astute reader may recognise shades of de Lubac's reading of Aquinas' here. According to de Lubac, nature is characterised by an *intrinsic* openness to grace, which is fulfilled by divine action *within* history (*c.f.* Kerr, 2002: 134-148). Contrast this with Climacus, for whom the condition of the reception of the infinite/God must be provided by the infinite as something *extrinsic* to the finite/nature.

Note that this contrast is less pronounced when we move from talk of fulfilment in grace to more general relationship to God. De Lubac himself recognises similarities on this point between

However, there is also a similarity between Climacus and Francis here. For Climacus, salvation arises from the absurd, in an utterly inscrutable, non-understandable contradiction to the *determinations* of our finite knowledge and power. This provides the basis for hope, in that these *determinations* would otherwise render salvation impossible.

Likewise, in stressing the tension between limitation and fullness, and the horizons which emerge from it, Francis reminds us that the process of salvation likewise ultimately transcends our knowledge and control. In other words, the fulfilment of our nature is something that transcends our capacity to anticipate and *determine* it.[177] This also means that progress, conceived as success achieved over time, must be "conceived in terms of *grace* and *the free response to grace*, not in terms of independent human achievement" (Grey: 6; see *LS* §78; 83; 100; 205; 221).

This too provides the basis for a hope against apparent impossibility: even where our knowledge and actions fail, we can hope that intrinsic resolvability of conflict may still express itself. Francis illustrates this neatly when he quotes John Paul II to write that the tribulations of creation must be read in light of the fact that "God… can also bring good out of the evil we have done. "The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable" (*LS* §80). As for Climacus, precisely because salvation is *indeterminate,* hope can be sustained even in the failure of *determination.* We might even say that for both Francis and Climacus, hope arises from knowledge born of unselfing, which recognises the limitations of our knowledge and its capacity to *determine* the operation of grace – a theme that we will return to below.

In summary, Francis' Eucharistic temporality provides security in hope amidst conflict. It does so by revealing conflict as the negative face of future communion, always-already oriented towards its own resolution. Moreover, this security is not just a general, abstract security;

Thomas (as he reads him) and Kierkegaard (which holds for Climacus) in that both invoke the idea of an absolute distinction between God and creation that gives rise to an 'existential' mode of relation between the individual and God, which cannot be reduced to pure theoretical or speculative knowing (Furnall, 2016: 126-134). Hence Francis also parallels this common element when he talks about human being-in-relation as presupposing encounter with God, and we extend this in our discussion of how conflict 'presupposes' communion.

[177] Francis expresses this when he refers to the natural world in communion with God as "sublime" (*LS* §234). He uses the term here in a non-technical sense, which captures the awe-inspiring transcendence of the world as site of encounter with God. However, it also captures the unsettling, and perhaps troubling aspects of creation which seem absurd or inscrutable to us in our finitude (Edwards, 2016b: 390-391).

rather, it is one that can be found in individual conflicts. This is because the process of reconciliation, for Francis, is fundamentally historical, occurring through the intrinsic resolvability of historical conflict as such. Moreover, the driving force of this resolution lies beyond the *determinations* of human thought and power. As such, this reconciliation can still occur even when we cannot anticipate it.

This in turn enables us to accept disagreement as unthreatening: *VS* views conflict as an attack on foundations which are already 'possessed', and must be defended from degeneration. Eucharistic temporality, on the other hand, shows us that faith is not such a process of recollection, to be recovered from the past and preserved from degeneration in the future. Rather, it is a process of repetition that looks towards a foundation that lies before us, and which is to be hoped for and awaited in obedience to its transcendence over the limitations of the present. This foundation is communion, towards which the cosmos is continually journeying. In this context, conflict is not an attack on a recollected foundation, but is rather the working out of this future communion. Thus it presupposes the promise of this communion in its very being. This in turn provides the basis for a hope of universal reconciliation *through* this conflict, undermining all portrayals of conflict as a threat – even in the face of an *indeterminacy* that prevents our anticipating the nature of this reconciliation.[178]

4. Conclusion: Fear and Triumphalism

4.1. Summary

In this chapter, we have addressed fears around the indeterminacy extended across all knowledge by the metaphysics of *LS,* as discussed in the previous chapter. Firstly, we argued that we could sustain doctrinal commitments in light of it by locating this indeterminacy on a second-order level. Secondly, we responded to concerns around epistemological crisis accompanying this. We argued that the metaphysics of *LS* enables us to conceive of multivocity in *credere Deum* in terms of multivocity in *credere in Deum,* thereby enabling a

[178] In this vein, Grey (6) describes time as portrayed by *LS "*as *gift,* not *given*", evoking our relationship with God, and therefore rendered meaningful, in this hope. This enables us to embrace it and value it in the context of this relationship. Similarly, Scherz (2018) argues that the teleological orientation of eschatological time gives it qualitative value. This enables us to appreciate the present as valuable, despite its quantitative limitations, and therein attain satisfaction in one's finitude. Hanby argues that the critique of the technological paradigm in *LS* implies that the intrinsic nature of creation is "in some sense normative" (2015: 746). This can be taken even further than Grey and Scherz: if the nature of creation is to be temporally bound, then respect and appreciation for this becomes an ethical impulse. Lasida demonstrates this by reading Francis' four principles in light of the dialect of his first principle as a guide for economic activity (2017: 109-121).

reparative approach towards it as outlined in chapters four and five. We then showed how the Eucharistic theology of *LS* encourages us to view alterity and conflict not as a threat, but with hope. This consoles the fears that undergird the decision for paranoid hermeneutics, thereby enabling the adoption of a reparative alternative.

We shall conclude this chapter by extending this to comment on what might be described as the 'style' of Catholic theology. We will argue that the comic narrative of Eucharistic temporality establishes a security that both enables and invites an ethic of unselfing. This in turn is realised in a correspondingly comic style, which delights and persists in the redemptive contradictions of present limitation.

4.2. SECURITY AND UNSELFING

In this chapter, we saw how Francis' four principles in *EG* can be read in cosmic terms, rooted in a metaphysics of *relation* that finds its fulfilment in communion and reconciliation. Francis' first principle, "*Time is greater than space*" (*EG* §222-225), outlines the necessity of an eschatological framework for approaching conflict. Reading it in this way shows us how this principle is allied to Francis' third principle, "*Realities are more important than ideas*" (*EG* §231-233), which cautions against idealism and reduction. For Francis, what is *real* is that which is eschatological – which, as we have also seen, is that which is unsettling, *indeterminate,* and (perhaps most importantly) hopeful. This also enables a re-reading of his other two principles: "*Unity prevails over conflict*" (*EG* §226-230) because we have a common destination in communion with God and each other, which is also a common destination in the truth as revealed in the fulfilment of creation. Likewise, his instruction to reject false, *totalising* universalism in his fourth principle, *"The whole is greater than the part"* (*EG* §234-237), can be read as a rejection of attempts to anticipate the form of this communion in a way that forgets the irreducible transcendence of that reality, lying beyond the limitations of our present in the eschatological future. Hence also, it becomes a critique of the projected unities and totalitarian hierarchies which troubled us in our last chapter; as well as Teilhard de Chardin's eschatological monism,[179] with which the vision of *LS* has been compared,[180] but which culminates in the erasure of certain pre-*determined* groups in a way that is evidenced starkly by his endorsement of eugenics (see Slattery, 2017: Online).[181]

[179] Francis cites de Chardin in *LS* §83, footnote 53.

[180] For example, Lane (2017: 39; 51); Slattery (2017: 71); O'Halloran (2018: 394); Hrynkow (2018); van den Heuvel (2018: 57-58)

[181] Haught (2019: Online) criticises Slattery's reading of de Chardin as failing to recognise his acknowledgment of differentiation in unity. Read in this way, de Chardin is more like Francis as we

We can read this as illustrating the close relationship between the four principles of *EG* and Francis' ethic of unselfing – a relationship that has implications for the 'style' of the Church. By locating the resolution of these tensions in the cosmic eschatological future, he reminds us that this resolution escapes us today not merely because of practical difficulties that could be overcome if only we tried harder, or were more forceful in advancing our positions, but because tensions and difficulties are a feature of the cosmos in our current stage in history. The recognition of *indeterminacy,* and the impossibility of *totality* or *absoluteness,* as cosmic principles shows how an ethic of unselfing is a necessary condition for truthful apprehension of the world in all its messiness and opacity. However, this recognition is not quite resignation. Rather, it is consoled by the security of knowing that creation, now in its awkward adolescence, will find its fulfilment in eschatological maturity.

This combination of unselfing and security reflects the key distinction between Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. The paranoid-schizoid subject attacks the Other in defence of the self. That is, they are moved by insecurity to assert itself over and against the Other, both in violent assault, but also in epistemic terms in the *determination* of that Other via a *totalising, absolute* hermeneutic*.* In contrast, the depressive subject no longer fears for the self in the face of the Other, and is enabled by this security to seek to recover the Other – a process which involves respecting their alterity.

In short, it is precisely because we are secure that we can be less confident in ourselves, and acknowledge that the world escapes us without fear. Consequently, we might ask whether the supposedly confident style of some 'triumphalist' theologies, with their eagerness to master their objects and vanquish their opponents, fails to embody the *true* confidence that is proper to the Church.

4.3. A COMIC STYLE

Instead, the confidence offered by Francis' eschatological vision enables a *comic* style. In this style, the Church can allow itself to become the object of humour, deriving joy and hope from its humiliation.

Climacus argues that religion is unique in that it can never become comical in itself. This is because, in relating itself solely to the infinite, there can never be a contradiction between

read him. In this vein also, Hrynkow sees in de Chardin the basis for a cosmic vision that is *more* integrative of diversity than that given in *LS* (2018: 615). However, Slattery (2019: Online) presents historical evidence in defence of his original reading.

the object of its passion and the infinite (Kierkegaard, 1846: 465).[182] However, existence within Eucharistic temporality is distinct from Climacus' religion, in that fullness is the intrinsic fulfilment of limitation. This means that the relation between fullness and limitation is not one of negation.[183] As a result, existence within this temporality is very much one of contradiction, lying in the tension between the two – that is, it *is* comical.

However, unlike for Climacus, where this humour ultimately turns on the negation of the relative before the absolute, for Francis, the contradiction of this humour turns on its fulfilment – which is to say, it is a hopeful one. This means that this contradiction can be born joyfully, as it does not threaten that dignity itself: the holiness of the Church lies in its silliness and pettiness as much as its grandeur.

This in turn means that the Church can itself deploy self-mockery, and laugh with its critics. In doing so, it also gains a new language for joining them, enabling more honest, critical self-evaluation:[184] humour can strike propadeutically against otherwise discursively intractable convention (Lippitt, 2000: 22). In this vein, Francis' images of the dirty, smelly Church remind us that the Church is *capable* of being dirty and smelly. Read symbolically, this reminder is also a reminder that the Church is capable of reaching out to the Other, and embracing difficulty and uncertainty – that is, of taking a more reparative stance. Conversely, a humbling joke can also help us shake our foolish confidence in limitation by revealing this limitation to us – the discomfort of which can be born in the security that, if we are saved at all, we will be saved as those who were foolish in that moment.[185]

Another way of putting these points is in terms of persistence in the comic perspective. When we 'give priority to space', and attempt to resolve the contradiction of the present, we condemn ourselves to tragedy: because of the actual limitation of the present, this tension will reassert itself - which we will experience painfully.[186] In contrast, Eucharistic temporality figures fullness as promise; something that can only be achieved *through* limitation, and in

[182] Including when the infinite is in the finite, by virtue of the absurd.
[183] Not even an absurd negation that preserves and elevates it.
[184] This is not to say that all failings are comical, in the same way that not everything will have a place in the Kingdom. The relevant distinction here lies precisely in whether a failing can be found funny: for example, the terrible church choir is hilarious. However, there is nothing to laugh about in child abuse.
[185] Note the resonances here with Francis' endorsement of the "law of gradualness" (*AL* §295), and statement that the Eucharist is "not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (*EG* §47). It is precisely *because* of this confidence that we must recognise the limitations of the present.
[186] I am indebted to Marcus Pound for this insight.

relation to which that limitation is defined, but which does not negate that limitation itself. It therefore both dignifies limitation, and thus also the contradiction that defines it. This in turn enables us to refuse any premature resolution, but rather to take pleasure, and thus persist, in it.

We might understand this as something like N'yong-O's concept of *recursion,* which we saw in our first chapter: this is a reading practice in which the negative-affective hermeneutical circle of paranoia serves as the basis for a positive-affective reparative project, which emerges from the reading activity itself, and yet thereby preserves it (2010: 249). The significant aspect of this is the link between frustration and pleasure, wherein the constant repetition of frustration becomes a source of fulfilment - for example, in a community built upon the basis of shared complaint. Likewise, Eucharistic temporality invites us to acknowledge the contradiction of the Church in limitation as inescapable in the present, frustrating the desire for fullness. In a quasi-*recursive* movement, we can take pleasure in this frustration, as in doing so we glimpse the fullness by which limitation is defined and affirmed.

Nevertheless, this orientation towards fullness remains comic: in affirming limitation, this view of future reconciliation returns us to limitation and the contradiction itself. Consequently, acknowledging fullness leads us back to acknowledging limitation and the contradiction between the two poles of Francis' dialectic. Eucharistic temporality is comic because it shows us the way out of the contradiction in fullness – but it *remains* comic because, in doing so, it returns us to the contradiction.[187]

We find all of this embodied in the meditation on the "Marian "style" to the Church's work of evangelization" that concludes *EG* (§288). Francis writes that Christ's promise of redemption is delivered "with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope". We are shown how to navigate this confidence by Mary, with whom "we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of this promise". However, in a return to the contradiction, Mary's example is not a triumphalist, aggressive one. Yet, *as* a return, this in itself comes *out of* this confidence and strength: "Whenever we look to Mary… we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to

[187] Milbank (1996: 312-313) makes a parallel argument relating to the relationship between worldly ethical commitments and the infinite commitment of faith in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling,* wherein Abraham's sacrifice of the former in service of the latter is made in the hope of its return *in* the latter.

feel important themselves". Thus, in a joyfully comic turn, Francis concludes by heightening the contradiction with the invocation: "to her we pray…"

VIII. Conclusion: a postmodern hermeneutic of Catholic uncertainty

In this brief conclusion, we will consolidate the argument of the previous chapters. In section one, we will begin by reviewing the argument that we have followed throughout this thesis. We will then look briefly at the limits of what we have (hopefully) achieved. In section two, we will move from this to discuss a key feature of Francis' theology, as we have read it – namely the way in which he articulates the essential Christian ambivalence towards the world. We will begin by looking to how Francis mediates the twin poles of what Komonchak (1994) calls "Augustinian" pessimism and "Thomist" hope, situating him in relation to these two broad sensibilities within the post-Vatican II theological landscape. We will argue that he recovers themes of what Stump (2010) calls "Franciscan knowledge" in order to do so. We will then look to how this mediation enables the pursuit of new possibilities through self-overcoming. We will do this by placing Francis in dialogue with 'theologies of failure', wherein we embrace negativity and abandon our convictions, specifically Rose's (2019) "theology according to drive", and Tonstad's (2016) critique of futurity in ecclesiology. Finally, we will conclude by reflecting on how Francis' ambivalence enables us to achieve a reparative stance, moving from a paranoid resignation to threat, and instead achieving an eschatologically hopeful resignation in the face of our own limitations.

1. A hermeneutic of Catholic uncertainty

1.1. Review

This thesis began by identifying a paranoid hermeneutic present in the contemporary Catholic theological tradition. Drawing from Sedgwick, it argued that theology in this mode was characterised by three key epistemic features: *determination, totality,* and *absoluteness*, which it deploys in response to, and in construction of, the perceived threat of uncertainty. It looked to *Veritatis Splendor,* as well as the dubia put to *Amoris Laetitia,* as examples of this hermeneutic at work. It employed a 'reader-centered' reading of Francis' papal documents in order to articulate an alternative to this hermeneutic, reading those documents systematically in order to construct a theology that directs us towards a *reparative* hermeneutic. This new hermeneutic would embrace uncertainty in hope, admitting epistemic *indeterminacy,* non-*totality,* and *inabsoluteness,* in contrast to the above.

In chapter three, we then saw how *Lumen Fidei* articulates a model of faith knowledge that serves as the basis for a theology that can embrace uncertainty in knowledge. Faith knowledge, in the encyclical, arises from an encounter with God as Other, manifesting first in the unthematic knowledge of *touch,* which is then thematised in *sight.* The priority of *touch* over *sight,* along with the historical nature of faith knowledge, means that *sight* is characterised by two horizons, which *Lumen Fidei* expresses as *hearing*: a qualitative horizon, representing the qualitative transcendence of *touch* over *sight;* and a quantitative horizon, representing the gradual process of growth in *sight* over time. Because of these horizons, our thematic faith knowledge can never claim to *totality,* instead always admitting *indeterminacy* and the possiblity of revision or *inabsoluteness.* We also argued that this model of faith-knowledge requires an obediential ethics of 'unselfing', in which the knower refuses to assert themselves over and against divine transcendence in alterity by rejecting the conditions of *hearing.*

In our fourth chapter, we focused on issues of *credere in Deum,* arguing that *Lumen Fidei's* founding of faith in encounter establishes an ecclesiological 'Marian priority', in which the juridical aspects of the Church follow from a fundamentally mystical dimension in faith. This in turn relativises them to this encounter. We read *Evangellii Gaudium* and *Magnum Principium* to argue that this enables a plurivocal model of ecclesial unity in *credere in Deum*, in which the unity of the Church admits historical variations in form corresponding to historical differences in encounter. This historical variation renders that formal unity an *indeterminate* one, which by implication defies the *totalisation* of any one form. Finally, we argued that the possibility for historical variation in encounter enables a positive-affective approach to variation in form, which can be read as signifying an achievement of faith across difference – even where that variation is negative. The upshot of this is uncertainty with regards to the forms that can be embraced within the total life of the Church.

Our fifth chapter read the ecclesiology of chapter four through the epistemology of chapter three. We argued that Francis' ecclesial 'Marian priority' establishes a *metaxological* model of ecclesial unity, in which the unity of the Church is a transcendent reality that transcends, and in doing so incorporates within itself, ideal unity and difference. This imparts a non-*totality, indeterminacy, inabsoluteness* to our ideas of ecclesial unity that corresponds to the conditions of *hearing* in our thematic knowledge of God. This indicates an intrinsic epistemological basis to the uncertainty of chapter four.

Finally, our sixth chapter extended the epistemology of chapter three to *credere Deum.* It argued that *Laudato Si'* establishes a cosmology of encounter that establishes *credere in Deum* as the foundation for all other knowledge. This means that *credere Deum* admits all the non-*totality, inabsoluteness*, and *indeterminacy* of the *credere in Deum.* This affirmed the scope of that epistemology, and the horizons of *hearing* as encompassing all theological knowledge. That is, the epistemological conditions of uncertainty identified in chapter three are all pervasive. We then looked to how the encyclical's cosmology establishes a 'Eucharistic' temporality that establishes a background of cosmic hope for reconciliation that enables us to face up to these horizons without fear. The result is a theology that enables us to embrace uncertainty, rather than trying to eradicate it through the imposition of *determining, totalising,* and *absolutizing* hermeneutics.

It is from this theme of uncertainty that the title of this thesis gets its name. Francis' hermeneutic is one of "Catholic uncertainty" in two senses. Firstly, as the uncertainty *of* Catholics: Francis provides theological resources which Catholics can deploy to guide them in uncertainty. Secondly of a specifically 'Catholic uncertainty': Francis' reparative hermeneutics embraces uncertainty, enabling us to abide in it in a specifically Catholic way. It is "postmodern" in a sense that we will explore in section two.

1.2. THE LIMITS OF OUR THESIS

It is worth stopping to reflect on what this thesis does *not* try to achieve. Firstly, we are not trying to push Francis' reparative hermeneutics as the *only* possible hermeneutics for Catholicism. Sedgwick's typology draws from Klein's concept of psychological *positions.* She looks to Klein here precisely because she seeks to overcome the idea that paranoid hermeneutics are inevitable or necessary in critical theory: just as for Klein we can move between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, so to does Sedgwick argue that we can move between paranoid and reparative reading practices. The same holds for Catholicism – indeed, by virtue of its very presence, there is a role for a paranoid tradition in Catholic theology. What Sedgwick seeks to do is articulate the *possibility* of a reparative alternative. Our thesis argues that Francis shows us this possibility for Catholicism, without turning it into another inevitability.

Likewise, our critiques of paranoid theology are all rooted within the methodological assumptions of Francis' reparative approach – they show how the paranoid tradition might be lacking from this alternative perspective, which is not the same as showing that they are lacking *simpliciter.*

Similarly, as we have stressed multiple times throughout this thesis, Francis' more reparative approach is not the same as an indifferent one. It opens up our imagination to find hope where otherwise we may find none. However, this does not mean that we must conclude that there is hope in all things, let alone that everything is mostly hopeful. Some things, such as fascism, have already been shown to be evils, and it seems unlikely that there is some yet-uncovered hope to be found in it. Likewise, not everything will ultimately provide hope when read carefully. Hence Tonstad (2017: 11-12) notes that sometimes paranoid reading practices are just more truthful to the situation, and it would be wrong to discard our resources for dealing with these cases just because they are not universally appropriate.

In all cases, the possibility of hope is subject to the nature of the potential source, and our capacity to read hopefully is therefore conditional to truth. In this context, what is significant about Francis' hermeneutic is that it discourages us from taking the idea that our thought has exhausted the truth already as a general assumption. Moreover, if there is hope to be found, then a hermeneutic which makes us more sensitive to the presence of this hope will be a more truthful one. On this point, Francis' eschatology and metaphysics gives us a good reason to assume that this hope is present in most cases, against jaded dismissals of hopeful attitudes as naïve or Polyanna-ish.

We also should distinguish between hermeneutics and wider issues of practice. For example, just because a given idea might be a source of hope doesn't mean that it has to be implemented, or even given an audience in any given context. A hopeful hermeneutical stance towards a thing is different from an ethical imperative towards it, and likewise should not be conflated with any specific ethical imperative, excepting those involved in maintaining that stance in the first place (such as the obediential one towards unselfing). The possibility of hope does perhaps indicate the prudence of allowing some universally accessible 'spaces of uncertainty' in which the Other can be encountered, regardless of our presuppositions about them. However, the practical issue of identifying or constructing spaces appropriate for this is a complex one, and lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

2. Francis and the renegotiation of ambivalence

2.1. Francis between Augustine and Aquinas

For reasons identified in chapter two, our thesis has not worked to situate Francis in the prior Catholic tradition. This is not to say that we have read Francis as entirely divorced from this tradition: chapter six forefronts Thomist themes in *LS*, and chapter seven connects Francis with de Lubac. Nevertheless, this kind of reflection would be fruitful insofar as it would

establish more points of contact with wider thought that speaks out of that tradition. Additionally, we connected Francis with Buber (chapter three) and Kierkegaard (also in chapter seven). A helpful avenue for further study might be to look into these connections in more detail, integrating Francis into (or distinguishing him from) the wider systematic-theological landscape.

However, this is very much a task for the future. For one thing, our reading of Francis has been structured around explaining his hermeneutics of uncertainty, rather than his treatment of the key philosophical and theological issues around which these various systematic theologies are normally organised, or dialogue with those theologies themselves. Consequently, more work would need to be done in fleshing out the dispersed and contextual connections made in this thesis before we can do this. Likewise, part of this might involve trying to reorder our reading of Francis so as to build from this metaphysics in order to integrate the other themes in a way more redolent of the "exitus/reditus" structure associated with classic systematic theology genre conventions (Odozor, 1995: 9). Without undertaking these kinds of tasks, it is difficult to consider Francis as a voice in a tradition conceived as an orientation around certain key texts and thinkers. Sadly this lies beyond the scope of what is possible in this thesis, and it would also, therefore, be premature to try and comment on these considerations in any detail.

Nevertheless, there are a number of general points which can be made here; points which turn less on a detailed comparison with specific figures, and more on the presence of certain broad themes within Catholic theology in relation to which Francis, at least as we read him, takes a significant stance. These themes, concurrent with our concerns in reading Francis, are about where we locate our hope.

Tracy writes that the theologian must walk "the line between loyalty and idolatry" (1981: 47), recognising their ambivalent vocation to both love the world as God loves it, but also to recognise its sinfulness and contingency (1981: 48). Two divergent approaches to this ambivalence can be found in Komonchak's heuristic typology of the prevailing trends in Catholic theology around the Second Vatican Council, which contrasts broadly "Augustinian" with broadly "Thomist" approaches. According to Komonchak, the Augustinian approach presupposes "a sharp and unmediated distinction between sin and grace, natural reason and faith". This is expressed in a hermeneutical priority of "religious categories" over 'natural' or secular ones. For the Augustinian, the world is to be mastered by a knowledge brought to bear analytically upon it; a divine *determining* principle held over and against a sinful,

determined world. In contrast, the Thomist approach "effects a theoretical differentiation of the natural, not in order to deny that the drama of sin and grace is the only real drama of human history but in order to promote a more accurate understanding of it". In short, for the Thomist, the world is a site for the 'working out' of grace. As this site, it becomes a source of both hope and insight, both read by, but also possessing the power to reciprocally *determine,* the knowledge of the tradition which approaches it (1994: 87).

From our framing above, we can see that the Thomist approach is relatively more reparative than the Augustinian. In this vein, champions of the Augustinian approach reproduced the self-confirming paranoid dynamic of threat construction and negation in their critiques of the Thomist approach, which they argued lacked a sufficiently strong sense of sin and its privation of the natural (construction), resulting in an unacceptable subordination of theology to an impoverished natural reason (negation) (Komonchak, 1994: 88).

Francis, as we have read him, broadly represents the Thomist approach: in this thesis, we have seen how Francis envisions history as the site of grace, requiring us to look for the action of God around us. In one sense, he seems to even speak against the Augustinian pessimism about the world, enjoining us even to suspend our suspicion in the name of a hope that grace can be found in the most surprising of places.

What is significant about Francis, however, is that he also channels an Augustinian sensibility. The possibility of this hope is expressed in an ethic of unselfing, which refuses to assert the self as knower over and against an *indeterminate* eschatology. In this context, *we,* with our pretensions to certainty and mastery, are the world. Hence the working of grace in history is to an extent over and against us in our self-aggrandizing efforts to achieve *totality,* and thereby *determine* what properly transcends us; it is for this reason that it is fundamentally *unsettling,* even as it brings our fulfilment. Of course, this opposition is not complete: our lives, as part of that history, are sites for providence, and we can participate in the divine action therein. Even so, the driver of this action lies beyond our power – indeed, as we saw in chapter seven, this is the key to hope even in the direst of circumstances. When we participate in grace, it is never from a position of mastery. Just as the Augustinian approach teaches that only the supernatural can truly read nature, for Francis, grace always ultimately masters us.

Perhaps Francis' greatest insight is that this inversion of Augustinian suspicion is enabled precisely because of a more Thomist hope in historical grace. As we have seen, Francis can

embrace the uncertainty that comes with this suspicion not just because he holds on to the promise of fulfilment, but because he recognises this fulfilment as lying *in* the uncertain elements of history. We encounter grace *in* the moments where it most escapes us. Francis is enabled in this through his deployment of a third broad theme: what Stump refers to as "Franciscan knowledge".

In chapter three, we looked at length at how Francis employs broadly Buberian concepts of alterity in order to underpin his epistemology; something which we returned to in chapter six, where we saw how this epistemology, when united to a Thomist metaphysics of analogy, forms the basis for a Trinitarian apophaticism that extends its indeterminacy to all knowledge. We might be slightly concerned here that, in doing so, Francis airlifts in 'secular philosophy', without care for its wider systematic relation to what is less problematically considered 'the Tradition'.

In chapter two, we looked at arguments which cut against this kind of concern. Firstly, Francis' theology enables receptivity to alterity, and any rejection of the Buberian elements of his thought on the basis of a professed alterity needs to contend with this if it is not going to fall into a kind of question-begging. Secondly, we are reading Papal documents; texts which are at least nominally part of the Tradition by virtue of their identity. In this context, the inclusion of Buberian concepts in *LF* problematises quick claims that they are 'untraditional'. Thirdly, the example of Aquinas' engagement with Aristotelianism shows that there is precedent within the tradition for integration from the secular; indeed as the history of Thomism shows, if this integration is successful then the previously 'secular' can become as 'traditional' as Aristotelianism is now. This being the case, then the integration of secular concepts is not enough to render a theology 'untheological' or 'untraditional'; rather, it is this integration itself which must be assessed.

One way of understanding Francis' integration of Buber is as the recovery or *ressourcement* of a pre-existing theme within the Tradition, albeit in contemporary(ish) terms. This theme is what Stump refers to as "Franciscan knowledge".

Stump develops her account of Franciscan knowledge by contrasting the epistemic approaches involved in stereotypically Dominican and Franciscan religious life. She notes that Dominican mission (broadly speaking) is undertaken through disputing philosophical and theological postulates, taken in abstraction from the particular individuals who profess them. In this context, epistemic priority is given to discursive reasoning, which approaches

the world in light of these postulates (2010: 45-6). In contrast, Franciscan spirituality (broadly speaking) is construed first and foremost as an interpersonal response to a personal address by Christ, which is made through a personal, imitative relationship with St. Francis himself. This gives rise to a distinct epistemic approach, which affords priority to "knowledge of persons conveyed by second-person experiences of persons" (2010: 61).

Stump sees this second-personal mode of knowledge as an example of a broader type, albeit one that is difficult to define more precisely. She opts to contrast it with "knowledge *that*", in which knowledge is construed as propositional attitudes ("I know that [proposition P] is true") (2010: 51). For Stump, Franciscan knowledge is a kind of knowledge that does not reduce to propositional attitudes – this being why it cannot be defined in terms of those attitudes (2010: 51-2). The parallels here with Buberian *relation,* which Francis reproduces in his metaphor of *touch,* are clear.

Franciscan knowledge provides the bridge between Thomist historicity and Augustinian suspicion. As the object of unthematic knowledge, the Other (both divine and creaturely) possesses a transcendence that resists *determination* within thematicity, and which thereby unsettles claims to thematic *totality*. This requires the Augustinian suspicion of the self as knower, which refuses to falsely *determine* the Other in defiance of their transcendence. This also has a Thomist aspect, in the sense that the Other is encountered in history, which thus becomes the site of transcendence and redemption. Correspondingly, however, history is only a site of redemption by virtue of a transcendence that is inseparable from alterity, turning us in hope away from our own capacities and towards grace in a characteristically Augustinian way.

In short, for Francis, Franciscan knowledge shows us how to hope in history, but in a way that refuses to locate that hope in immanence. Moreover, united to his Thomist metaphysics of analogy, it becomes a way in which history can participate in transcendence specifically by sharing in its *indeterminacy.* As we saw in our discussion of Francis' Trinitarian apophaticism in chapter seven, this means that it does so specifically in a way that resists the *determination* both of history and of that transcendence. Rather, it is precisely this *indeterminacy* which is baptised as the signature of divinity, and therefore the true locus of our hope.

2.2. A THEOLOGY OF FAILURE

This ordering of Augustinian suspicion to Thomist hope is perhaps most significant in that it enables us to deploy negativity in a self-critical move, opening up not merely new possibilities, but new possibilities *in spite of ourselves*. As Rose puts it, it enables us to read Christianity "according to the logic of drive rather than desire" (2019: 13). This means shifting the emphasis from the active pursuit of fullness and possession (the movement of Freudian "desire"), the dark side of which includes the urge to violently assert oneself over the Other in the course of this possession, in favour of finding satisfaction in our unfulfillment (the movement of the Freudian "death drive").

Rose resources Žižek's ontology as the basis for a theology according drive. The result is a conception of the Church as constituted by and realised in a process of change arising from a purely immanent negativity. From this, she offers a model of faith as fidelity to the ongoing material project and community of the Church, which emerges from this immanent process. This enables her to reject models of faith as faithfulness to an ideal reality (of dogma, or the ideological figure of the Church). This in turn enables two things: firstly, the recognition of the Church's historical violence, which is occluded in order to sustain idealised models of the Church, but which is entirely compatible with the Church's identity when considered as an historical community. Secondly, this historical identity possesses an indeterminacy and fluidity of identity that enables faithful reform away from Christianity's violent historical elements; a process which she describes as a kind of redemptive 'failure' or 'betrayal' of those elements, and for which Žižek's ontology provides additional support in its rooting of identity in this very failure or inconsistency. This opens up the possibility for a theological imagination that escapes the pre-*determinations* of its own troubling history.

We find similar themes in Francis' writings. Firstly, our reading of Francis is similarly historicist. As we saw in chapters four and five, our ideas of what forms can intelligibly be called 'Church' must be qualified by the mutable historical realities of its communion. This means that the Church must be identified with the forms in which (for better or for worse) we encounter God as an historical community. Moreover, in placing the formal unity of the Church at the service of a fundamentally historical phenomenon of encounter, Francis thus likewise enables a fluid understanding of what it is to be Church.

Secondly, for Francis, this process is similarly reflexive. This possibility emerges when we look to Rose's critique of the deconstructive, Derridean turn in theology, represented by thinkers

such as Caputo and Keller, which bears out superficial similarities, but also a crucial difference to Francis' approach.

The deconstructive turn reorients theology around the question of economy "away from the relationship of God to the world and toward the relationship of the individual to the world" (Rose, 2019: 43), redeploying themes of apophaticism in order to talk about the disjunction between the economy of language and the world in which we as speaking, spoken subjects find ourselves. In this, Derrida seeks the fulfilment of desire as the rupture of economy, rather than its completion in the attainment of a divine One (2019: 37). Rose argues that Derrida, rather than breaking from the Christian tradition in this movement, instead radicalises its apophatic heritage by broadening the scope of transcendence to encompass not just the divine (and the divine elements within the world), but the world in general in relation to human life and language (2019: 43).

Rose critiques the deconstructive theological tradition based on its emphasis on apophaticism at the expense of decision-making, which must ultimately rule for or against a position; something that Caputo and Keller reject as allying religion to the positive force of violence (2019: 46-47). Rose argues that while this apophatic approach seeks a way out from the totalised regime of contemporary capitalism, in failing to posit an alternative it adopts a utopian stance that ineffectively seeks a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism. In an ecclesiological context, she argues that this similarly lacks the resources to challenge the historical relations of domination enshrined in the traditions of orthodox Christian thought and practice. Instead, deconstructive Christianity reaches out in an anodyne universalism that embraces the Other without offering a real challenge to the basis of their exclusion; a basis which may also be the foundation for, and thus repeated in that universal gesture itself (2019: 53-54).

The distinction between Francis and Caputo or Keller here is that Francis' theology is concerned with the relation between God and the world, rather than the Derridean focus on the subject and the world. This concern for divine economy (unsurprisingly) places Francis less problematically within the traditional parameters of Christian theology. Admittedly, Francis prioritises Franciscan knowledge in his ontology of *relation* in such a way as to necessitate apophaticism about what might otherwise be considered immanent realities – a move that is superficially quite Derridean. Nevertheless, as we also noted earlier, this expanded apophaticism is integrated into a broadly Thomist metaphysics in such a way as to recover it for the tradition.

Francis' papal texts are not a manifesto for ecclesial revolution. However, his concern with divine economy enables us to imagine radical change in a way that bears out similarities with Rose's own solution to the inability of deconstructive theology to do so. Rose's solution is to situate the Church's identity in contradiction, enabling the reflexive dialectical movement away from its constitution as empire. In a move that is both similar, and yet fundamentally at odds with, Rose, Francis uses his concern for divine economy in order to similarly embrace immanent negativity as the basis for reform.

In our fourth chapter, we saw how the transcendence of the reality of the Church, towards which its worldly forms must be oriented, holds within itself the possibility of both inclusive and exclusive historical formal variation. Likewise, we saw in the previous chapter how this is reproduced in terms of knowledge: firstly, tensions between beliefs can be narrated as tensions in form, and thus negotiated in terms of variation in form. Secondly, the eschaton promises a reconciliation in truth that cannot be *determined* by the *totalisation* of any one position within present conflict. In short, for Francis, a diachronic metaphysical contradiction governs the resolution of synchronic ontic tensions in both ecclesial and an epistemic registers. Finally, we saw how this is embodied in a distinctively Eucharistic humour, which redeems the contradiction between immanent conflict and transcendent reconciliation. This in turn encourages us to persist in this tension, inhabiting immanent conflict *because of* our transcendent orientation.

In short, Francis' concern for divine economy leads him to embrace immanent negativity. This establishes a similar continuity-in-difference to that sought by Rose, wherein it becomes possible to say that the Church could be most faithful to its identity in change: in an ecclesial register, synchronic formal or ontic variation can enable greater diachronic fidelity to mystical identity. Likewise, in an epistemic register, synchronic change in belief can enable greater diachronic fidelity to final truth.

Moreover, in the previous chapter, we saw how this *indeterminacy* plays out on the second-order level, addressing the premises for first order positions. To put it differently, the contradiction between historical form and transcendent *telos* exists at a higher order than the relations and tensions within that historical form. Consequently, its resolution is determinative of those relations, rather than determined by them. This means that our progress towards this *telos* can resolve historical tensions so as to integrate or overturn any given historical form, including the ones in which we encounter that contradiction themselves. As for Rose, this thus enables the criticism of the universal gesture upon which

the Church seeks to include alterity. Thus Francis enables that gesture to undo its own basis and reveal the need for a reconstruction of Christian universalism beyond the logic of empire.

In doing so, he thus also escapes the perils of an imperialist universalism represented by Milbank and Pickstock, whom we have otherwise cited receptively in chapters six and seven. Following Rubenstein (2010), Rose critiques the hierarchical, politically conservative Neoplatonist reaction against Derrida, which she associates with 'Radical Orthodox' thinkers such as both Milbank and Pickstock. This reaction seeks the fulfilment of desire in a transcendence that analogically mediates difference; a mediation that amounts to a conforming (and inevitably violent) integration into the established order,[188] which thereby becomes identified with that transcendence. As such, she critiques this approach as failing to recognise the challenge that transcendence presents, which is precisely that it escapes our understanding and attempts at certitude (2019: 43).

Although the Thomist sensibility embodied in Francis' metaphysics grounds fulfilment in a mediating transcendence, Francis' inwards-directed Augustinian suspicion puts into question any anticipation of this mediation. Hence, although he deploys what we have explicitly framed as Milbankian themes in order to recover a fulfilling transcendence, he nevertheless does so in a way that undermines its conservative elements: as we saw above, this transcendence is always an unsettling one, showing us new possibilities beyond our expectations, rather than confirming and conforming the world to them.

Another way of putting it is that Francis, rather than pushing a *determinate* utopian vision to either confirm or deny the status quo, encourages us to be patient and open-minded (in *EG*, fullness is a utopian horizon and not a state), but specifically in a sense of sustaining an expansive imagination that could nevertheless frame the possibility of revolution.

This deferral positions any 'revolutionary' reading of Francis nearer more uncertain radicals such as Mary C. Grey. Grey similarly embraces negativity (specifically, alienation within the Church) as an opportunity for redemptive transformation (specifically, ecclesial reordering against kyriarchy) (1997: 3). However, she holds that a truly universal ecclesiology can only emerge *through* this redemptive revolution (1997: 19-31), rejecting *determinate* programmes of reform in favour of bottom-up transformation, "*sparked off*" by, but not reducing to, community praxis, instead being rooted in a relatively *indeterminate* process of

[188] On this point, Rose also identifies Milbank's appeal to metaxological paradox with the same 'third way' sought by deconstructive theology, reconciling tensions within capitalism instead of resolving them in revolutionary dialectic (2019: 49).

interpersonal relation across diverse lines of social exclusion (1997: 123). Notably absent from this is a Marxist class analysis that might homogenise Grey's conception of excluded groups or commit her to an overarching programme (including the methodological primacy of praxis). This commitment to non-*totalising* subsidiarity is mirrored in Francis' Marian *basismo,* as seen in chapter four, which prioritises a similarly *indeterminate* process of local historical *relation*.

Nevertheless, the self-directed Augustinian suspicion of Francis' ethic of unselfing thus opens up the possibility for a self-overcoming abandonment of the evils in which we participate. In rejecting the *totalisation* of our ideas, we can embrace immanent negativity: we too can 'fail' them, 'betraying' them in a redemptive movement of negation that performs this rejection.

This also protects against a further risk, exemplified in what Edelman calls the figure of "the Child". According to Edelman, "the Child" embodies an unquestionable universal futurity thereby presenting a *total,* untransgressable boundary for political discourse. The result is a strongly *determined* politics, which can only reproduce the order represented by that boundary, and which in turn is consequently *absolutised* (2004: 2). While this *absolutisation* through *totalisation* and *determination* is problematic in itself for our reparative project, the true danger exemplified by "the Child" lies in the way this *determining* futurity asserts itself as a social *telos*; a universal freedom towards which all particular freedoms are ordered, and in the name of which the freedoms of particular historical individuals can thus be denied (2002: 11).

Specifically in the case of Edelman's "the Child", this order is heteronormativity, as embodied in an idealised picture of the nuclear family (2004: 2). We might also find resonances here with Francis' critique of the "economy of exclusion", in which society is so ordered towards continued economic growth that the unproductive are discarded; where "it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points" (*EG* §53).

Coming closer to the focus of our project, Tonstad illustrates how this futurity is reproduced in ecclesiologies that permit the suffering of particular historical individuals and groups in the name of fidelity to a universal 'continuity' of tradition. Tonstad connects these ecclesiologies to a particular kind of Trinitarian logic, in which the Church is conceived as analogous to the Son, proceeding from its origins in the Father through a process of continuous Fatherly generation in the teachings of a continuous (male) hierarchy, and

inhabited through continued fidelity to that process and its identity markers. In this context, the suffering of individuals who are excluded and condemned by the Church is accepted in the name of this reproductive continuity of tradition (2016: 264-268).

Embracing negativity protects from this kind of annihilating futurity. Edelman's response to the figure of "the Child" is to reject reproductive social imaginaries, thereby embracing the negativity of drive as a counter-principle to its desirous logic (2004: 9-10). Tonstad makes a similar move, re-imagining the identity of the Church around resurrection conceived as a negativity that "interrupts" reproductive continuity (2016: 269). Likewise, Francis' embrace of immanent negativity prevents us from *totalising* any element of the present, thereby preventing its projection into the future as an *absolute* horizon that *determines* thought. Hence although Francis identifies continuity of tradition with the constant assimilation of experience by the articles of faith (*LF* §48), as we saw in chapters five and seven, this process of assimilation is one of continuous contradiction, wherein the transcendent reality reflexively expressed in those articles unsettles rather than reinforces our *determinations*. Moreover, while this negativity does ultimately hold the promise of its own transcendence, it does so in a way that forbids the negation of particulars in the name of this transcendence. Rather, to attain the eschaton and thereby overcome this negativity, we must consider the particulars in which negativity presents itself as potential sites of grace, however unexpected. Significantly, Francis locates this redemptive negativity in the encounter with the Other, forcefully reminding us that we must specifically attend to concrete, historical people as the condition of our fulfilment. By extension, any futurity that annihilates them can only be a false one.

This does not mean a total abandonment of ideas of orthodoxy as continuity. We noted in the previous chapter that we can sustain *both* doctrinal commitments *and* a recognition of indeterminacy. Likewise, recognising that futurity *may* consist in the surrendering of our ideas of continuity does not mean that it *will*, or that we cannot maintain those ideas of continuity in the present, at least while they remain intact. However, this does mean that these ideas cannot be *totalised* or *absolutised.* In turn, this means that the act of negating the particular in favour of their universal vision is risky and uncertain, and only to be undertaken in the knowledge that it may actually represent the abandonment of fidelity to the Church's truth.

2.3. RESIGNATION, REDEMPTION, AND REPARATIVITY

This embrace of an authentically redemptive negativity in self-overcoming, is possibly the most significant aspect of Francis' theology. Firstly, we might say that Francis redeems metaphysics for postmodernity, finding a way of Thomist transcendence that integrates the negativity of Franciscan knowledge in order to avoid the dangerous positivity of *totalisation*. However, he also redeems postmodern negativity for theology, renarrating and thereby embracing it as the outworking of an unselfing Augustinian suspicion that presupposes divine economy. In this way, we might say that his reparative theology is already engaged with alterity, looking outwards to a secular world in an authentically dialogical gesture that both receives from, and offers to the Other.

Secondly, and even more importantly, this imparts a message about the nature of hope and resignation. To an extent, following Rose and Edelman, Francis' Augustinian embrace of negativity also constitutes a theology according to drive. Nowhere is this more clearly evidenced than his Eucharistic humour, with its recursive satisfaction in frustration. Yet the Eucharistic temporality which enables this humour reminds us that this negativity is nevertheless a hopeful one, to be persisted in as the site of a grace that escapes anticipation. Likewise, Augustinian suspicion is reconciled with Thomist reparativity by Franciscan knowledge because the *indeterminacy* of the Other is the outworking of transcendence. Thus, for Francis, drive is sanctified because desire finds its fulfilment in its recursive satisfaction.

In this, Francis powerfully renarrates not just what it means to hope for fulfilment, but also to be resigned to failure. For Francis, Christian resignation is a recognition of our own weakness that arises from a trust in God's transcendence over us. Thus it is in this resignation that we can find the greatest expression of our hope. In doing so, Francis represents the "achievement" of a reparative position. For Klein, reparativity is achieved through the overcoming of paranoia, learning to see the world unfearfully. Likewise, Sedgwick, in making reference to Klein's concept of the positions, seeks to show critical theory the way out from its hermetic circle of suspicion and despair, towards hope and joy. Similarly to Sedgwick, Francis shows us a way beyond fear; a way to recover a view of the world that is conditioned by an unshakeable hope in providence.

In light of this, Francis might perhaps be called a great theologian. This now (hopefully) established, we might also look to a more common, often dismissive, characterisation. Francis not only represents this achievement, but shows us the way towards it. This lies in a

rearticulated ambivalence, in which the suspicion that circulates within the deep Augustinian veins of our post-Conciliar Church is not merely overcome, but is redeemed in orientation towards a fundamentally hopeful vision. Francis enables us to shift our resignation: rather than being resigned to fear and threat, we are instead empowered to distrust in our own capacities, opening the space for the surprising joy of an unpredictable redemption. And, in doing so, perhaps he is also a great pastor.

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